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# HARPER'S

HARPER'S MAGAZINE/JANUARY 1997 \$3.95



## PRISONER OF WAR

The Lure of Gunfire and the Enemy Within  
*By Scott Anderson*

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## DREAMING OF A BLACK CHRISTMAS

Kwanzaa Bestows the Gifts of Therapy  
*By Gerald Early*

## BISHOP'S HOUSE

*A story by Mary Gordon*

## A FLAPPING OF SCOLDS

The Literary Establishment Descends on T. S. Eliot  
*By Vince Passaro*

*Also: Luc Sante, Daniel Harris, Gary Aldrich*

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*Patricia Steves and an unfortunate Saturn that met the same fate as one of her eggs.*



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# LETTERS

## Reconceiving Conception

As a woman sterile since undergoing a hysterectomy at the age of twenty-one, I approached Bob Shacochis's tale of infertility ["Missing Children," October] with a jaded eye. As the mother of one child by birth and two by adoption, I read it with growing indignation and a sense of despair.

I wondered how Shacochis would, in the end, connect this frantic search for the "missing person" of a child with the "anguished attempt to conceive." I know exactly how it feels to be missing a child, to long for the person who isn't there—but I also know that this pain, the child one seeks, and the animal act of reproduction have nothing to do with one another. I have been pregnant; it was interesting, but it had nothing to do with my love for the baby who arrived that way. I know this because I felt the same love for the babies who arrived the other way. Only the most unsophisticated belief about relations between parent and child make pregnancy essential.

Shacochis doesn't see this. Instead, he spends acres of heavy prose telling us how much it hurts that he and his wife can't see past conception. They must "endure" the "appalling" physical pain, the waiting, the costs, the sheer "hellishness" of being "persecuted" by yet another thin hope. He repeatedly confuses the issue by pretending to have no choice in the matter. He isn't the only person to mistake infertility for childlessness, but it is nonetheless a terrible mistake.

I had to stop reading and take a

deep breath when I came to the "Adoption was and always had been our safety net, and we in fact considered it a second act, a sequel." Millions of unclaimed children in the world are no one's safety net. They are lonesome human beings who need their own safety net. I did not adopt out of some noble urge to save a child; I adopted because I wanted another child. And I found two children who wanted a mother. We became a family, with varying shades of skin and hair and eye color, and we all know how little such things matter. It is a simple miracle, but a miracle all the same, and far more mysterious than the bloodless vials held out by embryology.

The obsession with genetic material and *looking like* one's family is the root of much evil in an already overcrowded world. It is one of the reasons so many babies have no homes and many of them never will. The thousands of affluent Americans are pouring what they claim to be love for babies down the drain of high technology is one of the most painful ironies of modern life.

I don't understand why we refuse to call the obnoxiously expensive fertility industry immoral. Surely we can say, "Enough."

Sallie Tisdale  
Portland, Ore.

Thank you for yet another essay about a childless, lifeless couple unable to conceive. This miserable account of a pair of neurotic, overachieving yuppies reinforces two stereotypes I thought we had left behind in the Fifties: that no woman can make any meaning out of her life without bearing a child, and that a woman who has an abortion will ex-

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forever a damaged psyche.  
 To Shacochis presents himself as  
 a noble husband who loves his wife  
 and the fact that she cannot provide  
 him with the "immortality" of children,  
 but it is his own desire that makes  
 her feel unworthy, incompetent, an inferior wife. She is,  
 after all, the mate of a man who  
 feels and whose solution to her  
 problem is to provide her with a  
 child so that he is relinquished of his  
 emotional responsibility to her. Is it  
 no wonder that she is so miserable?  
 Somewhere in this article does Shacochis  
 mention what his wife does for her  
 life beyond lawyering and writing.  
 Does she have hobbies, interests,  
 friends? Or is she just, as the book  
 goes, a life-support system for a  
 man? The one piece of his wife's  
 life that is shared with us is an account  
 of her teenage abortion, which is  
 offered up as the single event that  
 defined her reproductive decision-making  
 from there on in. Shacochis's wife  
 should find something rewarding to do  
 with her life, and the first step would be  
 to get rid of that insensitive pig of a husband.

by *dy Rousseau*  
 Pikesville, Md.

Bob Shacochis claims that "one level  
 of hell is exclusively reserved for  
 the insurance companies," presumably  
 because an HMO balked at paying for  
 his wife's elective fertility surgery. Why  
 should we, as insurance-premium payers,  
 be funding fertility games for I-deserve-  
 to-have-all baby boomers? Perhaps a level  
 of hell is reserved instead for spoiled  
 sinners like Shacochis and his wife.

by *leen and Eric Constans*  
 State College, Pa.

There is more than a hint in Bob  
 Shacochis's "Missing Children" of the  
 pampered child crying over a broken  
 toy, and I couldn't help feeling that  
 the real anguish behind this couple's  
 experience with infertility is the realization  
 that money can't buy everything. Shacochis  
 writes that the "woman I lived with and  
 loved" not only wanted "the freedom  
 to anchor herself in a career, she  
 simply didn't wish to be pregnant."

# DIVIDE AND CONQUER

## The Measure of Reality

Quantification and Western Society,  
 1250-1600

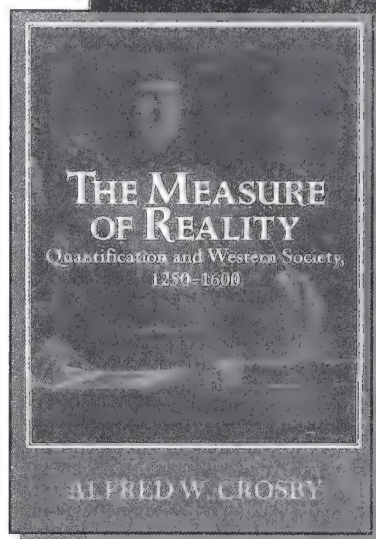
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Unfortunately, Mother Nature, unlike a department store, does not respond to such whims; childbearing simply becomes more difficult as a woman enters her thirties. Perhaps feminism has put mistaken emphasis on women fulfilling themselves through careerism while relegating more important experiences, such as motherhood, to the back burner.

Nadia Silvershine  
Kentfield, Calif.

When I was nineteen I became pregnant, and because my family's Catholicism was still an influence I went through with the pregnancy and put my baby daughter up for adoption. She and I spent three tender days together in my hospital room before I signed her away forever.

Bob Shacochis's essay sent me running to my filing cabinet for a collection of unmailed letters to my baby, which I wrote over the first weeks of our separation. I had not read them in eleven years and was overwhelmed by how young I sounded (and was) and how painful it was for me to have severed our bond.

I had always thought that things were much easier for adoptive parents than for biological parents who cannot keep their children; after all, the adoptive parents get the baby in the end. But Shacochis's honesty showed me that I had conveniently failed to imagine what a couple must go through before deciding to adopt someone else's child. Instead of the envy and disdain that I had come to feel for infertile couples, I found myself grieving for them.

When my husband and I attempt to conceive, I expect the process to stir some long-forgotten feelings and memories. And I think it will finally become clear that those in the position of Shacochis and his wife truly know what burdens pregnancy, in its many forms, can impose.

Stephanie Wilson  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

## Bull!

Tony Hendra's glowing article about bullfighting ["Man and Bull," November] with its near beatification of animal slivers continues

strong overtones of repressed sexuality and overt machismo—man proving himself at the expense of the "beast." Does Hendra think it really matters to the bull that he is given his "moment of glory"? I'm sure that, given a choice, the bull would choose a *lifetime* of dull moments over the terrifying, painful "moment of glory" he experiences in the ring. No matter how extraordinary the effort to drape it with the banners of culture, the bulls know the ring for the slaughterhouse it is.

Kenneth C. Connor  
Cruelty Caseworker, PETA  
Norfolk, Va.

Tony Hendra argues that opposition to bullfighting lacks merit because the bulls are dangerous and the Spanish are confronting death by means of killing them. What, pray tell, has this to do with the morality of killing an animal rather slowly, while inflicting additional pain by means of "harpoon-pointed" *banderillas*? And what about the picador's horse, which, as Hendra remarks in passing, the bull "can be relied upon usually to attack"?

Sorry, but as a means of facing death bullfighting makes denial look pretty good. What's next—an analysis of how wife beaters are confronting all our deepest anxieties about sex?

Jolanta Bend  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

## Censorship and Sensibility

*Harper's Magazine* let its readers down by reprinting a distortion-laden article by Marc Herman ["The Book-Banning Racket," Readings, October] about "Attacks on the Freedom to Learn," People for the American Way's annual report on school censorship and related challenges to public education. I am frankly appalled that you would publish what amounts to a rant by a disgruntled ex-employee (Herman left our staff three years ago) without making a single call to verify its accuracy.

The gist of Herman's tale is that we at People for the American Way somehow "cook" the numbers in "Attacks" so that we can claim every year that censorship is getting worse,

and that reporters are duped because they're too lazy to verify what they read or hear. If anyone at *Harper's* had bothered to check, the falsity of these allegations would have been plainly evident.

In the year in question, we reported that the number of attempted censorship incidents was down slightly. We reported the same in this year's report, released in September, as we have done in three of the last four years. In all those years we also point out that broader attacks on public education have increased, as right-wing political groups shift the strategic focus of their efforts to undermine the public-education system. A clear evolution of our methods appears in the first pages of our report and in our press release, and is provided at our press conference. A quote that Herman employs in an effort to undermine our report actually supports our findings: Dalia Kandiyoti of the National Coalition Against Censorship says of school censorship, "It's not that it's getting worse, but it's taking different forms." That's exactly the conclusion of our report.

Moreover, we print case studies of every single incident we find; in the year that Herman worked on this report, we identified 347 incidents of attempted censorship, every one of which is written up in case-study form right there in the report. No one who doubts our numbers can count for himself.

The censorship attempts documented by the report are testimony to the bruising ideological battle now under way for the future of public education in America. Efforts to get rid of sex-education programs, novels dealing with homosexuality, literature by African-American women, and the like are about something broader than an attack on the freedom of expression and academic inquiry. They are about social control playing out on a larger societal stage as well.

"Attacks" is one of the best-documented reports published in *Washington*: we don't just claim a particular number of incidents; we report them individually, state-by-state. "Attacks" is meticulously researched



ainstastakingly fact checked. Although it's not laboratory science, the approach is consistent from year to year: we send questionnaires to editors, clip newspaper accounts, follow up on any other leads we can across. We conduct extensive research to weed out incidents that don't meet our standards for inclusion. We also spell out the standards that we consistently follow. And we consistently point out that we are not providing a comprehensive accounting but rather a snapshot of very disturbing activity that challenges intellectual freedom and the integrity of publication. Reporters who want to look on our documentation or follow up on local stories—and dozens every year—are given access to research files, including names and numbers of people involved in incidents.

This approach stands in sharp contrast to the one taken by *Salon*, the online magazine that first published Herman's distorted piece, and, unfortunately, by the *Harper's* editors who chose to reprint it. Not once did anyone from either publication call Peo-

ple for the American Way to check a fact or to see if anything we might say about the author's assertions or his track record as an employee here might shed light on the decision to publish his piece. In short, Herman's charges are untrue. He has fabricated or distorted his "evidence." If the article had been subjected to anything approaching the kind of fact-checking we subject our report to, it would have come back riddled with red ink.

Matthew Freeman  
Research Director,

People for the American Way  
Washington, D.C.

Marc Herman responds:

Freeman mistakes my charge of dishonesty for one of sloppiness. I am not suggesting that PFAW is less than meticulous in its fact-checking. I am saying that its data is engineered to bolster the group's preferred conclusions.

PFAW has several statistical categories in its report and strongly emphasizes those that help their case over those that don't. The 1993 drop

in censorship that Freeman notes in his letter, for example, went largely unmentioned in that year's report. The study's initial finding reads, "Attacks continue to rise: Challenges were more active in the 1992-93 school year than at any time in the eleven-year history of this report. . . . These include 347 cases of attempted censorship." That there had been 348 the previous year is not noted in the report's executive summary and only briefly alluded to in the body of the report, because it would have been absurd to claim so strongly that "Attacks continue to rise" when the most important indicator—the number of times people tried to censor books—essentially stayed constant, and actually fell.

We played those games because "Attacks," like Freeman's letter, is fundamentally a public relations document designed to highlight PFAW's agenda and discredit its admittedly odious political opposition, the religious right. Those goals, however understandable or admirable, do not render the report either honest or accurate. I stand by my account.

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# NOTEBOOK

## La vie bohème By Lewis H. Lapham

*Most artists are sincere and most art is bad, and some insincere art (sincerely insincere) can be quite good.*

—Igor Stravinsky

Long ago, before the arrival of the new information order, when apprentice novelists wrote in longhand and Jack Kerouac was still on the road to Nirvana, I used to associate the term “avant-garde” with poets in garrets and painters in lofts. I thought of cheap foreign wine, cold north light, and unreadable manuscripts bound with string and stored on windowsills next to a photograph of Ezra Pound and a poster commemorating the glories of fifteenth-century Florence. None of the associations have survived the last thirty years of constant revolution within the kingdom of sovereign images, and I now understand that the genius of the age reveals itself not in the impoverishment of its aesthetic sensibility but in the exuberance of its commercial imagination.

Like everybody else in New York who has anything to do with the media, I probably listen to as many as ten or twelve propositions a month from people hoping to wrench a profit from one or another of the new computer technologies—schemes for housing the New York Stock Exchange in a CD-ROM or reducing Freud’s collection of dreams to a database, designs for search engines that can solve the riddle of the sphinx, for Web sites that play the music of Beethoven’s symphonies or translate the chronicles of Froissart from the medieval French, twenty-four-hour commen-

taries on the Bible, shopping networks that deal in macadamia nuts and oriental dancing girls.

Most of the technical language I don’t understand, but through the mist of talk about info-dynamics and netseek I sometimes can see the heights of the new Parnassus, and I know that instead of perishing from the earth, the means of artistic experiment merely have changed forms—porous systems and agreeable bandwidths in place of an easel or a piano, a spreadsheet instead of four reams of foolscap—and over the course of a single week in late November I listened to three propositions deserving of brief summary, if for no other reason than to measure the distance between Picasso and Polycorn. As follows:

### A SOURCE FOR ALL SEASONS

Three days after the presidential election, a man wearing a well-cut but nondescript suit showed up in my office to offer his services as the supplier of news for every occasion. He gave his name as “David Cornwall” and looked to be in his early fifties, precise in his choice of words and careful about moving his hands. From a literary agent we both knew he had heard that *Harper’s Magazine* sometimes had need of an astonishing rumor or a convenient fact. If so, he could furnish on demand whatever was required.

For twenty years, he said, he had worked at writing novels, but none of his books had sold more than a few thousand copies, and the possibility of a second career occurred to him when he noticed that the better newspaper

stories depended upon sources variously identified as “informed,” “confidential,” “Washington,” “high-level,” “White House,” and “well-placed.” Further study persuaded him that these phrases served as a disguise for corporate or government bureaucrats with grievance.

“Here was a cast of characters easily understood,” he said. “People consumed by envy and pitted with malice. All I had to do was to assign them an office in the Pentagon or a seat on a campaign plane. I didn’t even have to give them names.”

First he made himself familiar with the statistical jargon and the starry repertoire of simple political issues. For six months he read government budgets, annual reports, congressional testimony, speeches delivered by corporate presidents at conventions and sales meetings. Once Cornwall had learned what the arguments were likely to be about, he began to work out the problems of motive. Within a year he had developed a plausible technique, making telephone calls to dedicated columnists from an unspecified crossroads within the interior of an obscure bureaucracy.

“The Department of Agriculture,” he said, “is like Namibia. People think that they’re supposed to know what it is and what it means, and nobody wants to admit that he never heard of the place.”

Emboldened by the credulity of his respondents, Cornwall extended his operations into the lesser provinces of the departments of Justice and State, appropriating the personae of increasing-



minent government spokesmen  
circulating remarks about the mur-  
der of Vincent Foster and forthcoming  
trial in Islamabad. Pretty soon he  
will see his work in print, dressed  
in the rubrics of authority, disturb-  
ing the peace of nations.

President Clinton's first term in of-  
fice had proved especially good for  
him. The congressional commit-  
tee investigating the Whitewater  
scandal welcomed any slander of ei-  
ther the President or his wife, and the  
wing newspapers gratefully lis-  
tened to him speak through the masks  
of Kansas state troopers and once-  
a-time securities brokers doing  
business for fraud. His collected works he  
found in leather volumes, which  
were ranged on the desk as if he were  
a successful author presenting a copy of  
his new book to Jay Leno or Oprah  
Winfrey. One of the bound volumes  
given over in its entirety to reprints  
in the *New York Post*, another to  
clippings from the *Wall Street Journal*.  
"You see," he said, not without  
pride, "what can be done."

Reminding me that *Primary Colors*  
was far more copies before its anony-  
mous author was discovered to be Joe  
Cornwall stressed the simplici-  
ty and low cost of operation. Not on-  
ly could an editor have more control  
over the news but the price of the ser-  
vice was a good deal less than the  
fees paid to a reporting staff.

Although I could appreciate the fi-  
nancial advantages of the business, I  
was still at a loss to know what satis-  
faction Cornwall derived from writ-  
ing so many similar variations on an  
ethical theme. "An audience," he  
said. "I'm writing the great American  
novel, and they read me in Kansas City  
and Detroit." He left a business card  
with a single telephone number and  
fifteen names, most of them listed  
in CNN's database and all of them  
connected by the First Amendment.

#### THE CELEBRITY IPO

At least twenty years younger than  
Cornwall and dressed in the Califor-  
nian manner (blue jeans, silk shirt, as-  
hamed beard, Armani jacket), Meyer  
was passing briefly through New York  
on his way to an Oasis concert in Lon-  
don. He was selling ownership in spe-  
cific individuals whom he had incor-

porated as public stock offerings—pri-  
marily actors and actresses but also a  
limited number of athletes, musicians,  
authors, fashion models, and televi-  
sion talk-show hosts. "What we are  
doing here," he said, "is trading in the  
currency of images."

Pressed for time, Meyer handed me  
a sheaf of advertisements for the fi-  
nancial press, together with copies of  
documents that he had filed with the  
SEC. The advertisements looked like  
the ones placed by Merrill Lynch or  
Morgan Stanley for CDT Systems, or  
Solelectron, or Infonautics—small  
squares of print listing a name, a date,  
the sum of the capitalization, and the  
number of common shares. The fil-  
ings provided information about the  
new company's prospective assets and  
potential liabilities—e.g., teeth, hair,  
film credits, critical notices, high  
school batting average, as well as sex-  
ual eccentricities, drug habits, and  
record of prior arrests. Only a few of  
the names were well known. For the  
most part they belonged to individu-  
als under the age of twenty.

He explained that nobody these days  
could become a star without first be-  
coming a celebrity, which was fortu-  
nate because celebrity was easier to  
manufacture than talent or intelli-  
gence. The research and development  
costs were relatively cheap, no more  
than \$15 or \$20 million for cosmetic  
surgery, a biography of some sort,  
clothes, entertainment, photo oppor-  
tunities, fees paid to publicists and  
precinct desk sergeants. As a careful  
student of the market, especially of  
the speeds at which images traveled  
(not only between continents but also  
between different forms of media),  
Meyer had worked out a set of equa-  
tions describing the time it took to  
transform a guitarist into a T-shirt or  
a basketball player into a sneaker.

"That's the point, of course," he  
said. "To change a subject into an ob-  
ject, which, as you well know, is the de-  
finition of an American success."

For the cautious investor Meyer pro-  
vided funds hedged against unforeseen  
turns in the market: three or four male  
action heroes balanced with an equal  
number of female comics, authors of ro-  
mantic fantasy in the same portfolio  
with authors of hard-edged detective  
stories. The adventurous investor could

photo: Jerry Bauer



## ANITA SHREVE delivers "a powerfully compelling tale"\*

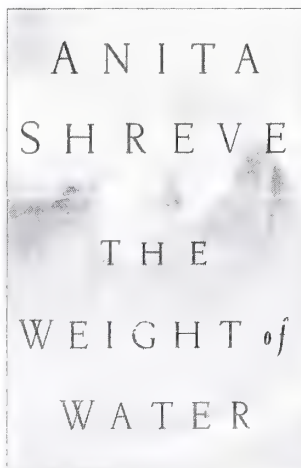
A hundred-year-old murder mystery  
leads a photojournalist on an  
obsessive journey through the past—  
and present—in the haunting new  
novel by the acclaimed author of  
*Eden Close* and *Strange Fits of Passion*.



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us into the best kind of mystery,  
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meditation on the nature of love...  
written with assurance and grace."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



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choose more speculative issues, among them a twelve-year-old pitcher in Caracas who could throw a baseball 300 feet and a psychopathic florist recently arrested in Galveston, Texas, on charges of murdering six people in a Laundromat after presenting each of them with a yellow rose and a red carnation. The florist hadn't yet been invited to appear on *Good Morning America*, but there was talk of both a book and a movie deal, and Meyer had heard that *The New Yorker* was sending a staff correspondent. It was this last rumor that troubled him. He didn't know if *The New Yorker's* interest meant that the florist was on the way in or on the way out.

Scornful of the Manhattan media's understanding of show business, he wasn't sure which newspapers and magazines were as accurate as *Variety*. In Los Angeles he had heard it said that once *The New Yorker* decided somebody was important enough to notice, the somebody so favored was already yesterday's news—a dead moon, an old postcard. Did the same rule hold true of *Vanity Fair*? Of *George*? What editors could be trusted to know the difference between a rising and a falling star?

#### TONTI EAREWELLS

In the early 1980s I had known Laughlin as a sculptor briefly famous for decorating the courtyards of suburban office buildings with assemblies of large and ambiguous stone. When the corporations lost their nerve for modernism (at about the same time that the auction and real-estate markets collapsed), Laughlin reconstituted himself as a designer of Christmas catalogues. We lost touch, but from mutual friends I heard that he had made a success of the business and that he had been one of the first people to see the possibilities in the television shopping networks, and so I wasn't surprised when he showed up in a state of high good humor, exuding the enthusiasm of a triumphant salesman, the color of his shirt matched to the color of both his shoes and his watch. We exchanged the customary pleasantries about the weather (cold), the effects of the communications revolution (marvelous to behold), and the direction of the twenty-first century (largely in the hands of the Chinese), and then, after

the customary moment of expectant silence, Laughlin handed me a catalogue similar to the ones advertising Caribbean resort hotels.

"Designer death," he said. "Like designer flowers or designer chocolate, but better. Much better. More personal."

Looking through the catalogue, I saw that it listed fifty or sixty available deaths in historical order, the "Socrates" followed by the "Julius Caesar," followed by the "Joan of Arc," the "Marie Antoinette," the "Nelson Rockefeller," the "Robert Maxwell," and the "Kurt Cobain." Accompanied by small but tasteful illustrations, each block of text hinted at the sorts of people likely to be attracted to a particular end. The brochure suggested the "Socrates" for "serene and philosophical individuals no longer besieged by the vanity of human wishes"; the "Nelson Rockefeller" was recommended for the "flamboyant and extroverted personality who delights in astonishing his friends and loved ones."

While I turned the pages, admiring the expensive weight of the paper and the elegance of the typefaces, Laughlin elaborated the marketing strategy in an excited rush of phrases and half-sentences.

"I'm talking spectacles," he said, "for people who have everything but still feel like nobodies. People too rich and too important to die anonymous deaths in sterile hospital rooms. Why shouldn't they go first class—with their names in lights and a chorus of savage tears?"

When I asked him if he expected any trouble with the authorities, if not with the police then with the Christian Coalition or the American Medical Association, he reminded me that Dr. Jack Kevorkian had assisted at forty-six suicides and been acquitted by no fewer than three juries in Michigan. Dismissing my objection as one of no consequence, he continued the sales pitch with unimpaired fervor.

"Like everything else," he said, "it's a question of cost. Take the 'Joan of Arc.' It could be staged anywhere—in Central Park, on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral, in a vacant lot; with a cast of jeering thousands, or in front of a few old and quiet friends on a lawn in Connecticut."

He expected different deaths to come fashionable among different groups of people. He thought that the "Marie Antoinette" or the "Catherine the Great" might appeal to society elites; the "Julius Caesar," to literary intellectuals, who tended to hate one another and always could recruit one or nine of their number willing to play any author whose book had received a splendid review or stayed on the best-seller list for longer than six weeks.

The brochure wasn't so gauche as to mention prices (available on request), but it was clear that any extra arrangements would add substantially to the unit cost. Arrangements could be made for varying intensities of media coverage, for costumes and cameos played by well-known actors and political figures, for souvenirs, recordings, and a farewell message written by an author along the lines of Dante Steele or John Grisham.

Wondering if I had passed over to the generation no longer comfortable with the experiments of the avant-garde, I asked Laughlin whether conservative politicians might think his entertainments insufficiently upbeat.

"Nonsense," he said. "You might see it from an inspirational angle. Americans are much too afraid of death, and this is the only thing that will cure them of their anxiety and hypochondria. Think of the exemplary proofs of human dignity and courage. Think of the relief from boredom."

He could see no flaw in the proposition, but he was having trouble convincing investors endowed with entrepreneurial spirit. Thinking that I might know such people, he left me with several copies of the catalogue, and in the afternoon, reading the small print on the last page, I noticed that a well-designed death also could get a tax deduction. It was possible to make of one's death a charitable entertainment, like a theater performance or museum benefit. The patron donated his or her death to a worthy cause; everybody enjoys a convivial occasion; the papers publish the guest list; the proceeds offset the sum of the taxes owed by the deceased's estate.

Reading the final selling point, I couldn't help but admire Laughlin's genius for the new.



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case that the whole White-  
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most politically charged case  
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—*The Atlantic Monthly*

Lyons offers the first fully cred-  
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—*New York magazine*

'Lyons sounds like the last sane  
voice in the din of the asylum.'

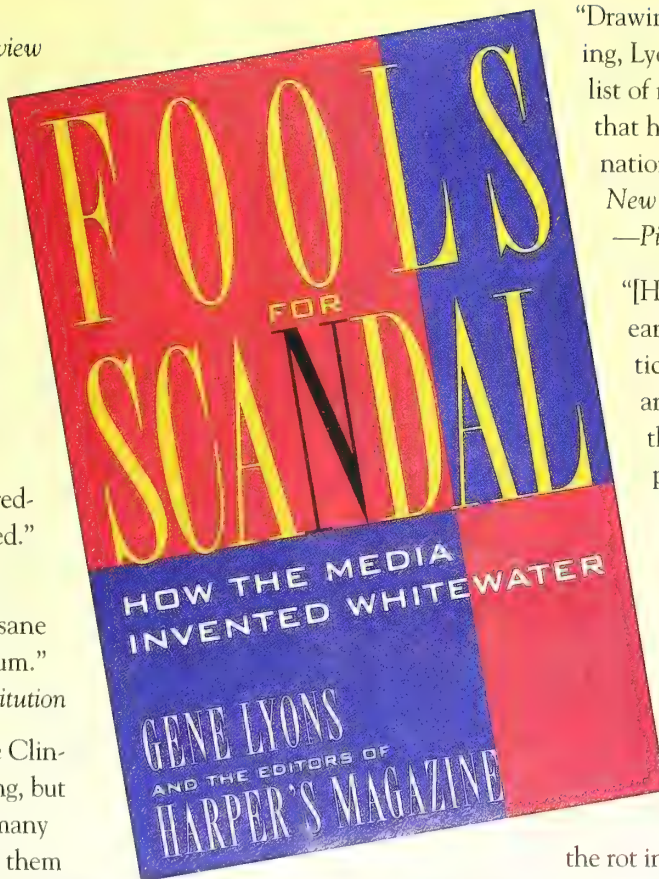
—*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

'Lyons doesn't claim that the Clin-  
tons never did anything wrong, but  
he convincingly shows that many  
[Whitewater] charges against them  
are exaggerated, politically motivated  
or flat-out wrong'

—*The [Cleveland] Plain Dealer*

"Lyons attacks with the same zeal that *New York  
Times* columnist William Safire displays when he goes  
after public officials whose veracity he doubts. The  
result has been indignation in the media and a coun-  
terattack on Lyons's credibility."

—*Christian Science Monitor*



"Drawing on years of newspaper-  
ing, Lyons catalogs a disturbing  
list of mistakes and omissions  
that he found in stories by the  
national press, especially [the]  
*New York Times*..."

—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

"[His] book, which follows an  
earlier *Harper's Magazine* ar-  
ticle, adds to the growing  
and legitimate argument  
that America's mainstream  
press, far from being ideo-  
logical, has simply gone  
bloodthirsty."

—*Los Angeles Times Book  
Review*

"Guaranteed to make  
you mad... Gene Lyons  
and *Harper's Magazine*  
ought to have a  
Pulitzer for digging at

the rot in the political press, but the

press will see they don't get one." —*Arkansas Times*

"[A] timely, important book." —*Publishers Weekly*

"He demonstrates pretty convincingly that the *Times*  
investigative reporter who broke the story ignored or  
didn't understand crucial information..."

—*Newsday*

"An excellent exegesis of Whitewater."

—*Molly Ivins*

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HARPER'S MAGAZINE







THE BOMBAY SAPPHIRE MARTINI, A



# HARPER'S INDEX

Number by which Americans who watched last year's Super Bowl exceeded those who voted in November : 43,000,000

Chances that a person directly affected by the welfare-reform law signed last year could vote : 2 in 5

Rank of Texas, the state with the least generous welfare program, among states with the highest adolescent birth rate : 2

Rank of North Dakota, the state with the most generous program : 50

Ratio of the population of North Dakota to the total number of Americans employed by Wal-Mart : 1:1

Average figure given by Americans when asked to estimate what percentage of the population is unemployed : 20.6

Percentage of Americans who are actually unemployed : 5.2

Percentage change since 1989 in the number of children living in poverty who have at least one working parent : +35

Chances that a Republican man believes that "poor people have hard lives" : 1 in 4

Percentage of poor, urban fifth-graders in a University of Michigan study who say that they smoke cigarettes : 6

Percentage who say that they've had sexual intercourse : 46

Years after Naomi Campbell said "I'd rather go naked than wear fur" that she posed for a 10-page fur spread in *W* magazine : 2

Percentage of Americans who are "more comfortable" with a First Lady who keeps the same hairstyle for an entire term : 17

Portion of U.N. peacekeeping missions ever undertaken that have occurred in the last four years : 1/2

Portion of the U.N.'s total debt that is made up of back dues owed by the U.S. : 1/2

Amount by which Medicare's outlays exceeded contributions in 1995, the first year the program had a deficit : \$36,000,000

Size of the Medicare deficit in 1996 : \$4,200,000,000

Percentage of elderly Medicare patients in fee-for-service plans whose health declined during a four-year study : 28

Percentage of elderly Medicare patients in HMOs whose health declined during the study : 54

Number of states that forbid HMOs from offering doctors financial incentives to restrict treatment to their patients : 3

Chances that a nurse would not want a member of her own family to be treated in the hospital where she works : 2 in 5

Number of hospital fires in 1995 caused by the spontaneous combustion of latex patient-examination gloves : 4

Percentage change between 1980 and 1992 in the number of HIV-negative Americans who died of infectious diseases : +22

Percentage of people who go to the bathroom in New York's Penn Station who do not wash their hands : 40

Amount that SculptYours, in Santa Monica, California, charges to bronze a set of buttocks, depending on size : \$2,700-\$3,700

Number of Bill Clinton Waffles a California bakery has sold since their introduction last September : 50,000

Percentage change since 1992 in the number of Latinos registered to vote in California : +45

Percentage of Americans who say that they speak English "very well" : 94

Chances that an evil character in a Disney animated movie speaks with a foreign accent : 1 in 2

Number of his own children Ted Turner laid off during the merger of his company with Time Warner : 1

Amount spent each year on electricity to operate all the exit signs in buildings in the U.S. : \$1,000,000,000

Chances that a computer is left on overnight : 2 in 5

Rank of Taurus among the astrological signs of people most likely to use the Internet : 1

Rank of Aries among the astrological signs of people most likely to be in an automobile accident : 1

Percentage of all commuter trips taken in 1980 that were in car pools : 20

Percentage today : 13

Rank of the United States, among G-7 nations, in investment in public infrastructure : 7

Amount the U.S. spends on road construction and maintenance each day : \$180,429,842

Average number of potholes per mile of paved U.S. road : 8

Miles the average sixth-grader doodles during the school year : 1.3

*Figures cited have been adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of November 1996. Sources are listed on page 3.*

*"Harper's Index" is a registered trademark.*



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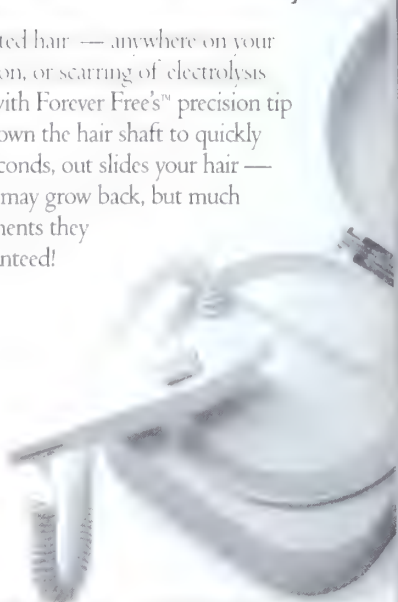


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# READINGS

[Essay]

## LITERATURE'S GREAT DIVIDE

*From "Rhyming Action," by Charles Baxter, in the Fall 1996 issue of the Michigan Quarterly Review. Baxter is the author of a book of poetry, six books of fiction, and a collection of essays, Burning Down the House, forthcoming from Graywolf Press. His essay "No-Fault Fiction: Blame the Presidents" appeared in the November 1994 issue of Harper's Magazine.*

**F**or the last three hundred years or so, prose writers have, from time to time, glanced over in the direction of the poets for some guidance in certain matters of life and writing. Contemplating the lives of poets, however, is a sobering activity. A poet's life is rarely one that you would wish upon your children. It's not so much that poets are unable to meet various payrolls; it's more often the case that they've never heard of a payroll. Many of them are pleased to think that the word "salary" is yet another example of esoteric jargon.

I myself am an ex-poet. My friends who are poets like me better now that I no longer write poetry. It always got in the way of our friendships, my being a poet and writing poems. The one thing that can get a poet irritated and upset is the thought of another poet's poems. Now that I do not write poetry, I am better able to watch the spontaneous combustion of

poets at a distance. The poets even invite contemplation of their stormy lives, and perhaps this accounts for their recent production of memoirs. If you didn't read about this stuff in a book, you wouldn't believe it.

Prose writers, however, are no better. Their souls are usually heavy and managerial. Writers of fiction are by nature a sullen bunch. The strain of inventing one plausible event after another in a coherent chain of narrative tends to show on them. As Nietzsche says about Christians, you can tell from their faces that they don't enjoy doing what they do. Fiction writers cluster in the unlit corners of the room, silently observing everybody, including the poets, who are usually having a fine time in the center spotlight, making a spectacle of themselves as they eat the popcorn and drink the beer and gossip about other poets. Usually it's the poets who leave the mess just as it was, the empty bottles and the stains on the carpet and the scrawled phrases they have written down on the backs of pizza delivery boxes—phrases to be used for future poems, no doubt—and it's the prose writers who in the morning have to clean it all up. Poets think that a household mess is picturesque—for them it's the contemporary equivalent of a field of daffodils. The poets start the party and dance the longest, but they don't know how to plug in the stereo system, and they have to wait for the prose writers to show them where the on/off switch is. In general, poets do not know where the on/off switch is anywhere in life. They are usually off unless they are forcibly turned on, and they



stay on until they are taken to the emergency room, where they are medicated and turned off again.

Prose writers are always studying you to see if there's anything in your personality or appearance that they can steal for their next narrative. They notice everything about you, and sooner or later they start to editorialize on you, like a color commentator at a sports event. You have a much better chance at friendship

with a poet, unless you are a poet yourself. In your bad moments, a poet is always likely to sympathize with your misery, and in your good moments to imagine you as a companion for a night on the town. Most poets don't study character enough to be able to steal it; they have enough trouble understanding what character is.

**O**f all human occupations, the writing of poetry leaves the most time for concentrated leisure activities. Poets have considerable quantities of spare time and a low boredom threshold, which makes them fun and scary to be around. With poets, you are likely to find yourself, as I once did, driving around town at two in the morning looking for a restaurant that sells roast beef sandwiches; the sandwiches, in this case, were not for the poet but for his hunting dogs, who had become accustomed to this diet. Loyalty is a religion for poets, and in any case they need the requirements of friendship to fill the twenty-three and a half hours a day that they are not writing. They are distractible, however, since they are usually thinking about an image or a favorite phrase or a new approach to the sacred. Prose writers have to spend hours and hours in chairs, facing paper, adding one brick to another brick, piling up the great heap of their endless observations, going through the addled inventory of all the items they've laboriously paid attention to, and it makes them surly, all this dawn-till-dusk sitting for the sake of substantial books that you could use to prop open a door. Fiction writers get resentful watching poets call it quits at 9:30 A.M. Writing prose is steady work, but it tends to make prose writers grumpy and moneygrubbing and long-faced. They feel that they should be rewarded for what they do: observing everything and everybody with that wide-eyed staring look, like a starving cat painted on a velvet canvas.

Poets are the nobility of the writing world. Their nobility has to do with their spiritual intelligence and their mind-haunted love of language and their subtle perfectionism. You can be a prose writer without having any kind of primary relation to the gods, but poets are often god-touched, when they are not being butchered by the gods, and this fate affects them in curious ways. They think about fate often, if not obsessively. Like other nobles who spend their days scouting the heavens, however, poets have little understanding of most worldly duties, except for writing poems and falling in love and having great sex, which explains why half of their poems are about writing poems or falling in love or having great sex. They float slightly above other occupations,

[Q & A]

## TRADING PLACES

*From the September 3, 1996, televised debate among the six Republicans running in New Hampshire's primary to replace retiring Representative Bill Zeliff. John E. Sununu, son of the former White House chief of staff, won the primary and the election.*

REPORTER: I would like to get away from the policy issues and ask a question that may reveal something about the candidates themselves. If you could trade places with anyone who is alive in the world today, who might you choose?

VIVIAN CLARK: Oh, glory—Margaret Thatcher. I realize that she's no longer in power in England, but she is one of the most fascinating women I have ever heard or observed, and I would like just to spend time in her persona.

TONI PAPPAS: I would like to be Elizabeth Dole, because I think she's going to be the greatest first lady that this country has ever seen.

RAY WIECZOREK: I would like, if I had the opportunity—but not now while he's currently sick—to be Ronald Reagan. I would be very proud to be him for a day.

JACK HEATH: I want to go offbeat a little bit. I would love to become one of my daughters. My oldest is seven, and I watch her. She's just at that age when everything is fun in life. She's full of innocence. So if she's watching—Margaret, maybe I'll be you in school tomorrow.

JOHN E. SUNUNU: If I had the opportunity, I think I'd probably change places with my wife. Nobody works harder, nobody understands our children more, nobody understands me better. I'd like the opportunity to understand what it's like to live with me, day after day.



gazing down at them with anxiety and bemused incomprehension. In order to survive, they manage to acquire jobs associated with towers and unworldliness: university teaching, marriage counseling, and forest management. They love to gaze at trouble from a distance, a condition often defined as "the sublime," and to comment on it. Their commentaries are nearly always correct and nearly always ignored, which is, after all, the fate of most prophecy.

[Retort]

## CATFIGHT ON THE FAR RIGHT

*From a letter sent last October by Gary Aldrich, author of Unlimited Access, to David Brock, author of "The Travelgate Coverup," "Living with the Clintons; Bill's Arkansas Bodyguards Tell the Story the Press Missed," and other American Spectator articles critical of the Clinton Administration. In his book, Aldrich, a former FBI agent at the White House, wrote that President Clinton had been sneaked out of the White House under a blanket for a tryst at the Washington Marriott. It was later revealed that Aldrich's source for that allegation was Brock; Brock publicly disavowed the story, saying that Aldrich had reported as fact what Brock had mentioned to him as a rumor, and in his own book, The Seduction of Hillary Rodham, Brock dismissed the tale as "idle gossip." Aldrich's letter to Brock appeared in Christopher Caldwell's column in the November 13, 1996, issue of the New York Press.*

Dear David,

I finally got my chance to score a free copy of your book yesterday. It happened at one of my book signings, just as I thought it would. See, when you are a best-selling author, they tend to give you extra attention, and one of the many perks can be a gift from the bookstore. Well, as you know, I could not expect to receive a copy of your book from you, so I had to rely on some other method to obtain it. I could not bear to spend any money on one, since I knew that \$1.50 or so would go to you, and that would just not be acceptable to me. Trouble is, I have one that's not signed. Any chance you could meet with me, say, in some dark alley, and sign it for me? Just kidding, David. Don't get paranoid or anything. I don't need it signed.

Sorry for all the bad press on your book, David. I guess some of it—nah, probably a lot of it—is coming from the stink that's left over from what you did to me. But actually, it's really a crummy book.

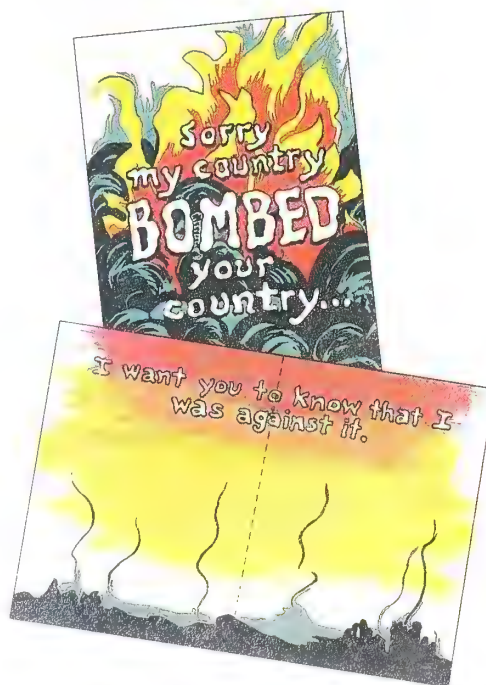
You talk of [my] violations of "discretion and respect" for the "office" and for the FBI. David, you can only *dream* of what it might be like to be an FBI agent working at the White House, or an Arkansas State Trooper, for that matter. In fact, you will never know what it's like to work at the White House—I'll make it my personal business to see to it that you are *never* accepted there, in the unlikely event that you ever want to go there. I guess I could allow you to have a White House tour. Let me know if you want one, okay?

You are a liar, David. You know in your heart that you are, but your sins are probably much greater than I could ever imagine. When you launched your attack against me and my book, it didn't take five minutes for everyone, left and right, to see what you were up to. You were used by the mainstream press, the same press that now says your book is D.O.A.

Way to go. Do you think that you will be

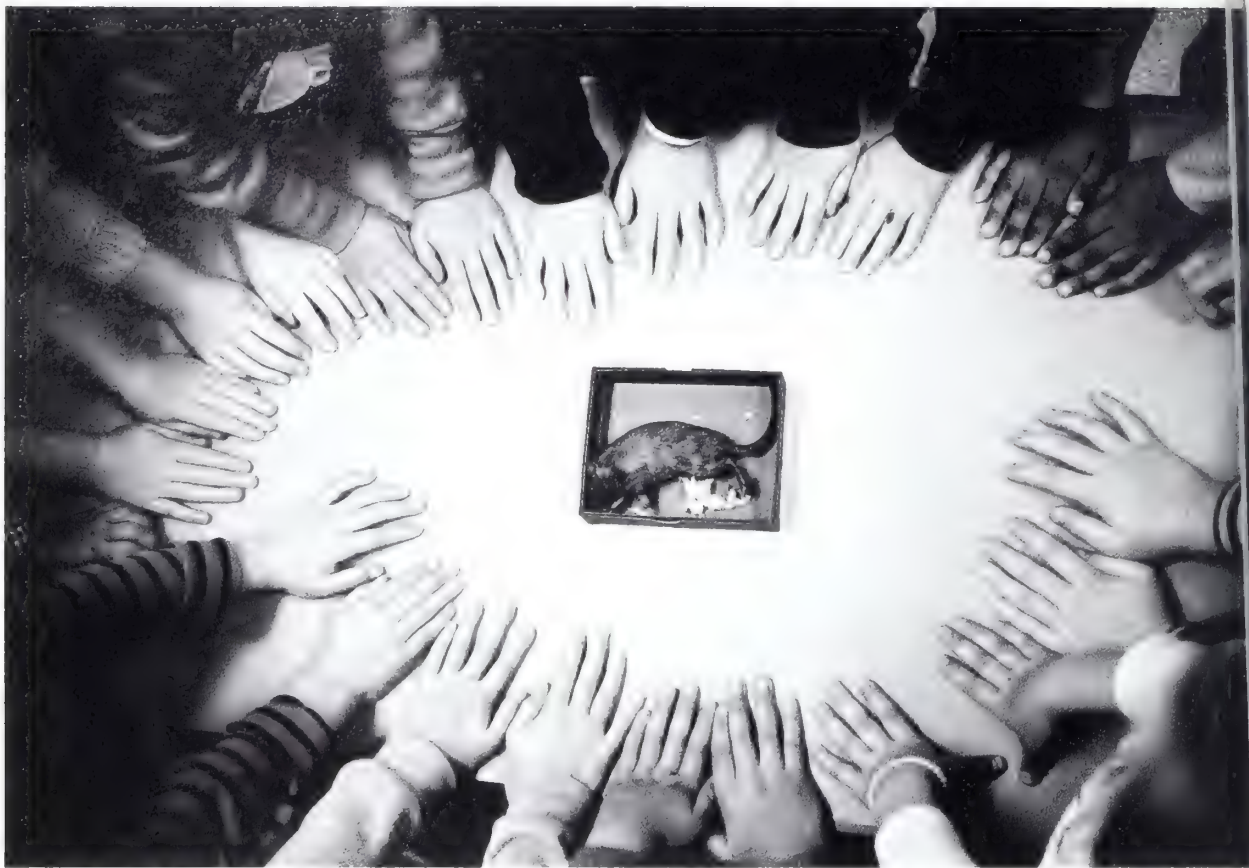
[Sympathy Card]

## WEEPING WITH THE ENEMY



*From Greetings, a set of "all occasion" cards conceived and illustrated by Erika Rothenberg. The cards are currently on display at the Susan Inglett Gallery in New York City. Rothenberg lives in Los Angeles.*





*"Death of the Gerbil," by Donna Ferrato. The photograph was taken in a kindergarten class at the United Nations International School in New York City. It was on display last October at the Thread Waxing Space in New York City.*

able to come back to the conservatives when you find that the liberals won't have you? Maybe that's possible—in about twenty years or so. From what I hear, there is deep, deep disgust and hatred for what you tried to do to me. But more troubling for you is the conventional wisdom that you cannot keep a secret, cannot shield a source. The Arkansas Troopers know who you really are now. So do I, and millions of others. You're the guy who gets information from a source, and then exposes and trashes the source, right?

Tell me, David, how does one write a book without sources? Perhaps you will now shift to novels. I have considered doing a novel or two, after about two more best-sellers I have planned. Poor mixed-up David Brock. Doesn't know who he is; doesn't know who likes him or hates him, or who wants to be his friend or his enemy. Doesn't know if he's a conservative or a liberal, a Clinton basher or a Clinton masher. Which is it, David? Enquiring minds want to know.

Anyway, bad luck on your new book. I guess I won't be seeing you at the remainder table,

because I won't be there. And David, don't get too testy (as in testosterone) on me, will ya? You know, I am not too far removed from my law-enforcement buddies, who think you are lower than, say, pond scum. It would be my suggestion that you always drive within the speed limit and never cheat on taxes. Probably you should not score any weed, or coke, or anything like that. Better have someone do it for you. Without even trying I can think of dozens of ways the "men and women in blue" can hold you to a greater degree of scrutiny. I suppose they will be tempted to hold you to the same impossible standard that you held me to. Poor Saint David, self-appointed Keeper of the Truth!

Well, got to go now. After 250 radio shows and counting, this book business gets to be too busy, a real grind sometimes, but one must do what one must do. And all the speeches, and fund-raisers, and TV. Wow. There isn't enough time in a day, is there? Oh yeah, I forgot—that only happens when you write a best-seller. Whoops. Sorry, David,



there I go again. I'm being insensitive. Well, I guess I'll have to work on that.

Warmest regards,

Gary W. Aldrich, author of *Unlimited Access*, a *New York Times* best-selling book for lots and lots of weeks. Thanks, David!

P.S. Will you and George Stephanopoulos be available for my next book? Check your calendar, will ya?

[Warning]

## BOSNIA'S ALTERNATE REALITY

*From an official cable sent on September 4, 1996, from the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo to the State Department and later distributed to the White House and the Defense Department. The cable, which was sent ten days before Bosnia's national elections, contradicts the Clinton Administration's public statements at that time that U.S. troops would be removed from the region "on schedule" by the end of 1996. According to the State Department, the cable was sent by mistake; officials attempted to retrieve all copies of it but were unsuccessful.*

*Secession: The Opening Move*

Post-election Bosnia will be threatened by the Serb drive toward secession. Pale's goal is no secret. [The Bosnian Serb leaders] Krajišnik, Plavšić, and Buha are staunch advocates of secession. Although publicly antiwar, they are not against war to further their own aims. At all levels the SDS [Serbian Democratic Party] preaches a sovereign Serb state. Soon after the elections, we expect a Serb referendum supporting secession. The vox populi reinforces this scenario. From Prijedor to Brčko in the north and from Bijeljina and Trebinje in the east, our contacts parrot the party line: "Republika Srpska [the Serb territory in Bosnia] is for the Serbs."

On September 14, the SDS will win the major seats. [SDS member Krajišnik was elected Serbian representative in Bosnia's three-way presidency; municipal elections were postponed.] For Bosnia, such results will signal the death of joint institutions, already undermined by continuing SDS control of local authorities. Control of the entire government will allow the SDS to move unimpeded along the road to secession.

*Krajišnik, Karadžić, Mladić: The Kings*

We expect an indictment [by the United Nations War Crimes Tribunal] against Krajiš-

nik in the upcoming months. His subsequent removal from the collective presidency will be perceived in the Republika Srpska as anti-Serb. The resulting backlash could be extreme.

The physical presence of Karadžić and Mladić in the Serb Republic engenders suspicion among Bosnians that NATO is not serious about prosecuting war criminals. Among Serbs, this perception supports the notion that a move toward secession will not prompt a serious response from the international community.

*Croat Reaction: The Bishops*

We believe Serb secession would be matched by the Croats. [Croat leader] Tudjman will not sit by while [Serb leader] Milosević pieces advance. The Croat-Muslim Federation, already severely taxed by mutual distrust, will fall victim to Croat separatism. Taking their cue from the Serbs, the Croats will reinvigorate efforts for a rump Croat state, eventually to be subsumed into Croatia proper.

*Queen's Gambit: Dayton II*

The elections, although vital to Bosnia, will not advance the peace process. The lack of will on all sides will not be miraculously reversed by the elections. The mistrust all parties feel toward the international community's commitment to regional peace will not evaporate when votes are cast.

[Procedure]

## IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, BREAK PHONE

*From an internal memorandum sent to USAir pilots on August 2, 1996, two weeks after the explosion of TWA Flight 800, by Captain Paul Sturpe, manager of flight operations and procedures for USAir.*

There may be occasions during an in-flight anomaly when it is desirable to disable the phone system [that is available to passengers]. USAir prefers to furnish press releases for in-flight anomalies instead of having this information reported live via telephone from the aircraft! The captain is encouraged to use his discretion in deactivating the phone system by pulling the circuit breaker in these instances.



We believe the Dayton agreement must be reaffirmed by all players. A Dayton II peace conference made up of those who took part in last year's negotiations will be crucial to the establishment of joint institutions and to the future of Bosnia. The new Bosnian leaders must renew their commitment to Dayton and immediately implement its key components: freedom

of movement [for all Bosnians] and the return of refugees.

#### *Pawn or Protectorate*

As things stand now, Bosnia is a captured pawn. Its partition is certain. There is no will on the Serb side to remain within Bosnia's sovereign borders. When the Serbs go, the Croats will follow. Therefore, in the absence of Dayton II, we strongly believe that Bosnia must become a protectorate.

A Bosnian protectorate must be safeguarded vigorously by a military force capable of implementing freedom of movement and the return of refugees. This is a long-term commitment—five years or more. The United States would be required to lead this effort. Although such an undertaking entails massive commitments, we believe it is now one of the few options left if the Bosnia envisioned a year ago in Dayton is to be preserved.

[Breakthrough]

## THE CIA OPENS WIDE

*From a speech given last July at the National Archives in Washington by Brian Latell, director of the Center for the Study of Intelligence, a branch of the Central Intelligence Agency.*

**W**e at the CIA are pleased to have this opportunity to underscore the commitment that Director John Deutch has made to greater openness at the agency and in the intelligence community. In particular, we are committed to accelerating our programs devoted to the declassification and release of historical records.

Today we are making a small but important new deposit on that pledge. We are releasing the appointment calendars and phone logs of the first two directors of central intelligence, from January 1946 to May 1947. Other important releases of CIA historical records will be forthcoming.

Of course we cannot promise that all CIA records requested will be fully declassified. Details of past intelligence activities and programs will sometimes still have to be redacted, since our legal obligation to protect sensitive sources and methods has no statute of limitations. Like those brave individuals who cooperate with U.S. intelligence today, those who did so twenty-five or more years ago will not be compromised. Similarly, it will be impossible for us to acknowledge past covert activities that would compromise ongoing intelligence programs or undermine current relations. We will also be unable to release documents that reveal foreign-government information.

We at the CIA are committed to knowing, learning from, and illuminating the agency's fascinating history. As we will soon reach our fiftieth anniversary, it is especially appropriate to emphasize our strong and sincere desire to share as much of that history as we possibly can with the American people.

[Call to Arms]

## SAVING DISNEY FROM ITSELF

*From "The Lines Have Been Drawn," by Rick West, a message posted last August on Promote Pressler! a Web site dedicated to the removal of Paul Pressler from his position as president of Disneyland in Anaheim, California. West, like many of the site's regular contributors, has an annual pass to the park.*

**F**riends, the past few months have been a mere exercise in what is about to become the largest online and public battle against Disneyland—specifically its managers, starting with Paul Pressler. He is the one who will be held responsible for the destruction of Disneyland as we know it and as Walt planned it. I write this with a very heavy heart. I do not want my playground to become my battlefield, but that is what it's come down to.

Today when I went to my mailbox I found a secret packet from somebody inside Disneyland. Scribbled in pencil were the words, "If you think it's bad now, then you all need to brace yourselves!" What was in the plain white Disneyland envelope caused me to sit in my car and nearly weep. Obviously things had been thrown together very quickly—photocopies were crooked, etc.—but the hard facts were there, staring me in the face. I'll present them as coldly as they were presented to me:

Pressler and his people are hell-bent on mak-





his photograph, by Alex Webb, was taken at a miniature golf course in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Webb's series *From the Sunshine State* was on display last November at the Leica Gallery in New York City. Webb lives in Brooklyn, New York.

ing major design changes at Disneyland. First of all, Main Street is about to become one large candy counter. To hell with the Bakery. To hell with the Penny Arcade. To hell with anyone who doesn't like it. Disneyland is going to tell the public what we want, and we want CANDY, not history or variety. Why? Because candy brings Disneyland \$\$\$\$MONEY\$\$\$.

When Pressler's people turned the Penny Arcade into a stuffed-animal shop, we fought, and Pressler relented and changed it back. But it was NOT a victory for us. It was a temporary "hush up" to calm the noise we were making. It turns out that Pressler and his mindless minions have far greater plans for the arcade: The antique arcade machines are to be pushed all the way back to the wall. The walls to the Candy Shop and the Bakery are literally to be knocked out, and the candy counter is going to extend all the way through the three existing shops!

The Carnation restaurant, in the meantime, is currently being redesigned as a coffeehouse, much like Starbucks. The seating area between Carnation and the next set of shops may become a stuffed-toy area or heaven knows what. (Ann Dale is another name to watch—she's in

charge of Disneyland's merchandise push.)

Now I shift your attention to Tomorrowland. The Mission to Mars project is still a go. It will be a restaurant. So what's the problem? What if I told you that Walt Disney Imagineering, the park's original designers, were not in charge of the redesign? What if I told you that Paul Pressler has brought in two OUTSIDE restaurant-design companies to rework Main Street and the Mission to Mars building—two companies that have NOTHING to do with Disneyland? Are you getting the picture now, my friends?

Paul, who are you going to fire? Are you gonna call everyone at Disneyland into your office and ask them who mailed me the package full of your lies and evil plans? This is a public thing now. It's up to us on the Internet. Friends, if you want to fight for Disneyland, I beg you to do so with all your might. If not, delete this and pray that others can make a difference.

Start making your calls, folks. The number for Disneyland City Hall is (714) 781-4000. That will give you a live operator. Ask for City Hall, and then tell them you want to make a formal complaint against Paul Pressler. This is critical,



and it must be dealt with NOW! Hell, use the number and ask for Paul Fressler's office—to hell with City Hall! Go to the man, friends! This is not a joke, nor is it a test. This is happening, and it is VERY real. I implore and beg you to help us. Otherwise, Disneyland is going to fall.

[Conversation]

## GUESS WHO'S NOT COMING TO DINNER

*From the transcript of the September 25, 1996, edition of Barbara Carlson and Friends, a radio talk show on KSTP-AM in St. Paul, Minnesota. Carlson began the program with a report about shootings that had occurred earlier that morning in downtown Minneapolis following a concert by the hip-hop group Bone Thugs-n-harmony. A portion of the transcript appeared in the October 2, 1996, issue of City Pages, a Minneapolis weekly.*

BARBARA CARLSON: Okay, Bone Thugs-n-harmony—we had three altercations with shots, one with ten shots. Can you believe this? I am just astounded. Now, I have Vic, who went to the concert, on line three. Vic, good morning, welcome to KSTP. Why don't you tell us a little bit about Bone Thugs-n-harmony, because, Vic, I don't know anything about them, but let me tell you, I'm learning. Today is my day of understanding and learning.

VIC: All right. Easy E, he was one of the first pioneers of gangsta rap, and he brought Bone Thugs-n-harmony out. He promoted them. Their latest album sold like 4 million records. So it's not just black people who like them. A lot of people who came to the concert were white.

CARLSON: Now, what is gangsta rap?

VIC: [laughs]

CARLSON: I mean, if you were going to describe gangsta rap to a middle-aged broad from Kenwood, how would you do it?

VIC: It's reality, it's what goes on in the black community. See, you guys don't know much about our community.

CARLSON: Well, we are trying and we are learning. So what is going on? You are being killed right and left?

VIC: [laughs] I mean, they are not just killing people. It's just that people get a hold of guns and they don't know how to act.

CARLSON: Do you have a gun?

VIC: Yes, I do.

CARLSON: Are you in a gang?

VIC: No, I'm not. But I live in south Minneapolis. It's a rough neighborhood.

CARLSON: How old are you?

VIC: Nineteen.

CARLSON: Nineteen and you carry a gun.

VIC: I don't carry a gun. I work every day, but when I go home, I got protection, you know, just in case, because my car has been broken into twice. I've had altercations. People busting my windows and everything. But I'm a peaceful person. Unless somebody—

CARLSON: Okay, I'm trying to understand—you carry a gun in your car?

VIC: Every now and then when I'm going to a party or something like that. But I don't just go out and start trouble, because everybody got guns. I mean, you got to ask yourself the question, Who makes the guns?

CARLSON: I don't need to know who manufactured them. I need to know who's carrying them.

VIC: No, you shouldn't say that.

CARLSON: I need to know who's manufacturing them?

VIC: Yes, because how else can you get guns? Guns are on the street. You can get one for \$20, \$30, \$40. It's not a big deal, you know, to buy guns.

CARLSON: It's not a big deal for you, but Vic, you see, there are a lot of people out in Minneapolis that it is a big deal for. I just hold my breath when you tell me that you go to parties and you're carrying a gun. How many guns would you say are at some of the parties you go to?

VIC: Well, it depends. If it's up in north Minneapolis, nobody going to bring them in, but they got them in their car or whatever.

CARLSON: So they don't bring them in. You don't put them in your high-tops?

VIC: [laughs] You're funny, Barbara.

CARLSON: See, I just read a book where they were in the high-tops.

VIC: If it's just a small-caliber gun, like a .22 or a .380, you can. But nobody don't really want to start no trouble, you know. Really, if somebody confronts you and tries to make you look stupid, that's the main reason they start trouble.

CARLSON: Is that called dissing?

VIC: Yeah [laughs], "dissing"—well, that's an old word.

CARLSON: Well, what's the new word?

VIC: "Playing." You know, trying to play 'em.

CARLSON: Playing?

VIC: Play 'em.

CARLSON: I'm really, Vic, trying to understand.

Playing, p-l-a-y-i-n-g, playing?

VIC: Playing 'em.

CARLSON: Do you have a family here?





Fatoumata" and "Mima," from The Exile Project, a series of portraits by New York City photographer Yuri Marder. Marder photographed people who "have left their place of language and origin" and asked them to write a statement in their native language about their experiences; he then etched the statements onto their portraits. At left, Fatoumata, who lives in New York City and whose native language is Susu (from Guinea), wrote: "You can throw a stick into the river, it will not become a fish. War is not peace." At right, Mima, who lives in Argentina and whose native language is Russian, wrote: "You are still living my dear old other, I am also alive, I send you regards." The portraits were on display last summer at the Marcia Wood Gallery in Atlanta.

VIC: Well, I got a baby.

CARLSON: You've got a baby. Are you going to marry the mama?

VIC: No.

CARLSON: Is the mama on AFDC?

VIC: I don't know. That's not the point.

CARLSON: Vic, I am trying to understand, and I am trying to learn, and I'm not trying to be difficult. Because I don't carry a gun, and there would be no way I'd have a gun in my car going to a party. But your lifestyle is different from my lifestyle. I'm years older than you are. I'm white. I'm all sorts of things, and I don't understand your lifestyle and I'm trying to get into it.

VIC: But I just wanted to make a point, because I know you've got a mostly white audience or whatever—

CARLSON: Oh no, we have a lot of blacks who listen.

VIC: Yeah, but you never discuss black views or

anything like that. I listen to your show a lot.

CARLSON: Well, Vic, we're doing it today. Now, I guess my next question is, Can't you get out of that environment, or is that the way—

VIC: You ask the easiest question to ask, but would you let me come stay in Eden Prairie with you or wherever—

CARLSON: I don't live in Eden Prairie.

VIC: Well, wherever you stay, you know what I'm saying? I don't think so.

CARLSON: You don't know that, do you?

VIC: Well, it's common sense. I go into the suburbs—

CARLSON: You want to have dinner?

VIC: No.

CARLSON: Wait, wait, wait, wait, Vic. Don't challenge me without— You want to have dinner tonight?

VIC: No, but I'm saying that in general, not you



probably, but most of the population—  
 CARLSON: Come on, Vic. You want to have dinner tonight?  
 VIC: No, no, you are getting off the subject.  
 CARLSON: No, no, no, no. You are getting off—I'd like to get to know you, and I am fine introducing you to my family and having you come over. You want to get your daughter together with my granddaughter?  
 VIC: Hey, can we talk about what—I just want to make a point, you know what I'm saying?  
 CARLSON: But Vic, I'm trying to make a point, too. You don't have to live a life with guns. If you are a kid who wants to get out of your neighborhood and go to work, you don't have to stay there.  
 VIC: I'm working now, but I don't know how long that will last.

CARLSON: What do you mean? Aren't you a good employee?  
 VIC: Yeah, but you know, I don't have \$50 million to go to college.  
 CARLSON: Well, what if I were to help you go to college? Are you smart enough to go to college?  
 VIC: I'm very intelligent. I'm trying to finish getting my—  
 CARLSON: Vic, do you want to go to school?  
 VIC: Yeah, I want to go to school.  
 CARLSON: Do you want to change your life?  
 VIC: Yeah. My life has changed a lot. I used to stay in Chicago, and it used to be way worse than this, and I used to be gangbanging and everything, so I'm taking one step at a time.  
 CARLSON: Why did you come here, Vic?  
 VIC: Because there's too much competition in Chicago.  
 CARLSON: Too much competition for drugs?  
 VIC: For everything. Drugs, jobs, everything. Everybody got their own reasons.  
 CARLSON: So how did you hear about Minneapolis?  
 VIC: Friends come up here and tell you that it's all good, you know. I mean, up here, that is what the problem is. Nobody don't know each other, that's why they're killing each other. Because, like, you got to grow up with people. Most of the people in Minnesota are from L.A., Chicago, Detroit, or whatever. If you grow up with people, you aren't going to be in a hurry to shoot them or whatever. But this is like no-man's-land in Minneapolis. Nobody don't know nobody.  
 CARLSON: Vic, I'm going to tell you something, and you can just toss it aside if you want. I'd be more than happy to have you come to my home, and I'd be more than happy to sit down and see what I could do about school. The only thing that I would ask is that you not have a gun when you come into my home.  
 VIC: I told—  
 CARLSON: That's all I'm asking, Vic. Now, I know you've got a point of view, and I'd like to be able to meet you. Do you know how to reach me?  
 VIC: What do you mean?  
 CARLSON: My name is Barbara Carlson.  
 VIC: I know your name.  
 CARLSON: Okay, I'm in the phone book. I'll give you my number right now if you want to call me at home. 3—  
 VIC: No, no, can I just—  
 CARLSON: Scare you, does it scare you?  
 VIC: No. I'm just trying to let your audience know that everybody ain't out there carrying guns. There are a lot of people like me out there who're trying to do something for

[Brochure]

## NORSE PLAY



This brochure is for Vikinglandet, a Viking theme park in Vinterbro, Norway. The photograph shows the re-enactment of a Viking home scene. Visitors also watch Viking battles, take part in feasts in honor of the Norse gods, and talk to the Raven Girl, a Viking witch.



themselves. I just wanted to let you know that I think people shouldn't be making gangs seem bad and stuff like that until they go after the gun manufacturers and everything and the people who make the drugs.

CARLSON: [laughs]

VIC: There was an article in the paper that the CIA, they funneled drugs into the black community. They are supposed to be—

CARLSON: Vic, I've got a surprise for you. You have a choice. You can blame society. You can blame the fact that you are black, you can blame the fact that you are from Chicago. You can blame the fact that there are gun manufacturers out there. You can blame, blame, blame, blame. But you have choices in this life. You can choose to move out of your neighborhood. You can choose to get rid of the gun you are carrying. You have chosen to go to work. You can go to college. I promise you that if you are a smart kid—and you certainly sound like you are—then I can help you, and there are hundreds of others out there who can help you, too. The choice is yours. And I hope we'll get together. Okay, thanks, Vic.

VIC: Yeah.

CARLSON: Thanks for the call. [silence, then sighs] Think I'll hear from him? Do you think he'll call? Or do you think he just wants to let us know that there are good kids out there? I know there are good kids out there. I've met lots of good kids. Don't think I don't know that there are good kids out there. But isn't it sad, ladies and gentlemen, that he carries a gun? Now, he says he doesn't carry it every day, but he carries it when he goes to parties. And "dissing" is out. "Playing you" is in. We'll be back with your calls in a moment.

[Analysis]

## THE DIVA IN DECLINE

From "The Death of Camp," by Daniel Harris, in the Fall 1996 issue of *Salmagundi*. Harris's *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture* will be published in May by Hyperion. His annotation of the cover of *Out* magazine appeared in the December 1995 issue of Harper's Magazine.

Sometime in early adolescence, I acquired, while living in the very heart of Appalachia—a land of lazy southern drawls—a British accent.

No one around me had a British accent. My father was from Chicago Heights, my mother from Braggadocio, Missouri, and my peers were budding good old boys whose fathers drove tractors and pickup trucks and spoke in an unmusical twang that I, a pompous fop, found distinctly undignified. Given the hearty, blue-collar community in which I grew up, the origin of my stilted style of delivery remained a complete mystery to me until, as an adult, I began to watch old movies. Over and over again in the voices of film divas as varied as Joan Crawford and Tallulah Bankhead, I heard the echoes of my own voice, the affected patrician accents of characters who conversed in a manufactured Hollywood idiom meant to suggest refinement and good breeding: Grace Kelly in *Rear Window*, Bette Davis in *Mr. Skeffington*, even Billie Burke as Glinda the Good Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*.

The influence of Hollywood and its stars was so pervasive among young homosexuals like myself that it insinuated itself into our voices, weakening the grip of our regional accents and leaving in their place the artificial language of an imaginary elite—a type of English heard only in the back lots of MGM and Twentieth Century Fox. To this day I have not succeeded in exorcising Joan, Bette, and Grace from my vocal cords.

This strange act of ventriloquism represents the highest form of diva worship and is the direct outcome of my perception in my youth that, as a homosexual, I did not belong in the community in which I lived, that I was different, a castaway from somewhere else, somewhere better, more elegant, more refined, a little Lord Fauntleroy marooned in the wilderness. In my unconscious imitation of the great film stars, I was seeking to demonstrate my separateness, to show others how out of place I felt, and, moreover, to fight back against the hostility I sensed in the homophobic, redneck world around me by belittling its crudeness through displays of my own polish and sophistication.

I was not attracted to Hollywood stars because of their femininity, nor did my admiration of them reflect a burning desire to be a woman, as the homosexual's fascination with actresses is usually explained (as if diva worship were simply a ridiculous waste product of gender conflicts). For me and for other gay men growing up before the gay-rights movement, our love of Hollywood was an expression not of flamboyant effeminacy but, in a very literal sense, of swaggering machismo.

Despite appearances to the contrary, diva worship is in every respect as unfeminine as football. It is a bone-crushing spectator sport in





From a series of embroidered "feminine merit badges" by Mary Yaeger, a Boulder, Colorado, artist. Yaeger's work will be on display in May at the Kansas City Artists Coalition in Kansas City, Missouri.

which one watches the triumph of feminine wiles over masculine wills, of a voluptuous woman single-handedly mowing down a line of hulking quarterbacks who fall dead at her feet, as in *Double Indemnity*, where Barbara Stanwyck plays a scheming femme fatale who brutally murders her husband and then dumps his lifeless body from a moving train in order to collect his insurance, or in *Dead Ringer*, where Bette Davis watches calmly as her dog lunges for the throat of her gigolo boyfriend.

Before gay liberation, homosexuals exploited these cold-blooded, manipulative figures to overcome the pervasive sense of powerlessness they experienced as a vilified minority. They modeled themselves on the appealing image of the thick-skinned androgyne, a distinctly militaristic figure who, with a suggestive leer and a deflating wisecrack, triumphed over the indignities of daily life.

Quite by accident, then, the diva provided the psychological model for gay militancy. When drag queens fought back at Stonewall, chances are that what they had on their minds was the shameless chutzpah of their film icons. Shit-kicking amazons in sequins, ermine, and lamé became so integral to the homosexual self-image that they helped gays tap hidden reservoirs of masculinity and look at themselves as something more than perpetual victims, despicable pansies too weak to defend themselves from the brutality of the police.

**I**rony was always present in gays' involvement with celebrities, partly because of the homosexual's sly awareness that he was misusing something as naive and wholesome as popular culture, with its Kansas-bred Dorothys and its Norman Rockwell happy endings, to reinforce

something as illicit and underground as his solidarity with other homosexuals. As time went on, however, the note of facetiousness implicit in many gay men's treatment of Hollywood became louder and louder, until the wry smile of camp became the cackling shriek of the man who could no longer take seriously the divas he once adored. By the 1980s and '90s, the pantheon of immortals, while still treated reverently by many gay men, had become fair game for ridicule, as when New York drag queens commemorated the 1981 release of *Mommie Dearest* by dressing up as Joan Crawford and kicking life-size effigies of her daughter, Christina, up and down Christopher Street.

One of the reasons for the change from idolatry to ridicule, from Joan Crawford as bewitching siren to Joan Crawford as ax-wielding, child-beating, lesbian drunk, is that in the minds of younger homosexuals the diva came to be perceived as an outmoded icon, a symbol of an oppressed early stage in gay culture. While gays are still obsessed with celebrities (although primarily as a political force, a P.R. tool for promoting "visibility"), young gay men no longer need diva worship as a source of empowerment and community. Quite simply, we outgrew our idols, who could not keep pace with our own political development.

As a result, divas have been retired as political vehicles and consigned to a museum of gay kitsch. The temple of celebrity worship was pilaged and defiled, and the sacred vestments became dresses for drag shows, with gay men wearing the girlish ponytails and clown-white makeup of the ravaged Bette Davis in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* or wrapping themselves in the muumuus of Shelley Winters. This new fascination with the diva as kitsch, a



laughingstock, a reptile in a dress who cussed like a trooper and threw drunken tantrums in public places, was the result not only of gays' increasing social power but of the very nature of glamour and the medium of film itself.

As embodied in the great actresses, glamour was meant to seem immortal and changeless, a state of effortless perfection. In the course of the most catastrophic events, the celebrity's makeup and coiffure remained as stunning as if she had just stepped out of a beauty parlor, no matter how many natural disasters she rode through unscathed, how many burning buildings collapsed around her as she fled, or how many hired hit men chased her breathlessly through the streets as she skipped along like a triathlete on stiletto heels. It was the actress's superciliousness, her indifference to what was happening around her, that appealed so strongly to gay men.

In real life, however, the women on whom gay men modeled their internal divas were unable to live up to these cruel standards of perfection. Because glamorous actresses attempted to seem indestructible, they were plagued by bathos, by the ever-present danger of mess, by the threat of accidents—the slip of a foot, the split of a seam, spills, stains—but, most important, by the inevitability of old age. The drunken Dietrich, tottering on high heels, fell face-first into the orchestra pit during at least two of her concerts, while Bette Davis's wig fell off when she was carted away, plastered, from a ceremony at which she was accepting an award. Judy Garland forgot the lyrics to "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" and, stoned out of her mind during one of her concerts, belted out "San Francisco" while the orchestra played "Chicago."

Indeed, the very camera that exalted these women was also the agent of their downfall. A power intrinsic to the medium of film—its ability to record the ravages of time—created an essential element of modern homosexual camp: its obsession with decay, decomposition, and decrepitude. By the 1950s, the careers of Dietrich, Crawford, Davis, and Hayworth were essentially over. But—and herein lies the secret ingredient of gay men's recipe for camp—long after these idols' reputations had begun to decline, the cameras kept rolling so that these sex goddesses turned into withered hags before our very eyes, shriveling up into mummies as they fought tooth and nail to revive their waning careers, finally sinking into the unfathomable depths of B-grade horror flicks, playing ax-murderesses and psychotic forgotten stars. And then, with the advent of television, the broadcast of old movies drove the final nails into their coffins: gay men were suddenly able to see, virtually side by side, what these women

once were and what they had become, watching one night a glamorous Bette Davis at the height of her career in *The Letter* and the next a battered old crone in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*

Without the late show, there is no camp, for camp is about the death of glamour, about the shattering of the sacrosanct illusion of youth and invulnerability, about knocking the idol off her pedestal and dragging her through the mud, subjecting her decrepitude to the same scrutiny to which the medium of film once subjected her beauty. In the New York drag festival Wigstock, celebrity desecration figures so prominently

[Recipes]

## A SMALL TASTE OF FAME

From "Driveways of the Rich & Famous" Recipe Booklet, a pamphlet written and published by John Cunningham. Cunningham is the host of *Driveways of the Rich & Famous*, a public-access television show in which he visits the homes of celebrities and interviews their neighbors and servants.

In her final years, Bette Davis lived in a West Hollywood apartment. Her doorman spoke on my show about his contact with the actress. Although there is no way to know what Ms. Davis's favorite recipe might have been, I did get to ask the doorman what he likes to cook.

### BETTE DAVIS'S DOORMAN'S SLOPPY JOES

1 lb. ground beef	1 ¼ cups water
1 pkg. sloppy joe mix	6 oz. tomato paste

Brown ground beef in skillet. Add other ingredients. Simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Spoon onto toasted hamburger buns.



Viewers will remember an interview with Shelley Winters's neighbor. Ms. Winters apparently wasn't too pleased about the interview, and she spoke quite loudly to her cable company about it. Below, the neighbor offers his family recipe for rum cake as an apology to Shelley.

### SHELLEY WINTERS'S NEIGHBOR'S RUM CAKE

1 pkg. yellow cake mix	½ cup cold water
1 pkg. instant vanilla pudding mix	4 eggs
½ cup Wesson oil	½ cup Bacardi rum (80 proof)

Combine ingredients. Bake 40–60 minutes at 325 degrees in greased and floured 10" tube pan.



that the whole spectacle often degenerates into a funeral in honor of the dead diva, who is paraded around by ghoulish drag-queen pallbearers, by men dressed up as Agnes Moorehead after she breaks her neck in *Hush*. . . *Hush*, *Sweet Charlotte*, or *Psycho*'s Janet Leigh mauled by "Mother."

Out of a sense of disillusionment, homosexuals have created a macabre form of ethnic humor in which they dance on their former role models' graves (this is sometimes nearly literal; the drag performer known as Dead Marilyn impersonates a cadaverous Marilyn Monroe exhumed from her crypt, her body scarred with the bloody gashes of her autopsy). In so doing, they relive again and again the hilarious realization that the diva was not a goddess, that she was flesh and blood, that she got fat just like they did, that she got wrinkled just like they did, that she had a miserable life and crippling diseases and financial crises and even died just like they did, but with one major difference: in the case of the diva, the press was there to get it all down, to record every pratfall and black eye and lesbian affair and drug overdose and nose job and trip to the fat farm.

The irreverent humor of the drag queen—dressed up as a trembling Katharine Hepburn, a dazed Peggy Lee in a scarf and black shades, or a haggard Tippi Hedren in *The Birds*, her teased-up wig a nest of carnivorous sparrows and sea gulls—represents the last gasp of idol worship in a secular age, the passing of a mode of religious experience, whose funeral gay men celebrate with delightfully deranged fervor. Camp is the satirical requiem of the heathen fetishist who has lost faith in his idol, the final rite of a religion that has outlived its usefulness.

[Advice]

## A DATE WITH THE FAMILY

From "Courtship Makes a Comeback," by Jim and Anne Ryan, in the November 1995 issue of *Focus on the Family*, a monthly published by the Focus on the Family ministry in Colorado Springs. Last November, Jim Ryan, a Republican from Kansas, was elected to the House of Representatives.

"H"eather, how would you like to go to a movie Saturday night?"

Our daughter hesitated. She didn't know the young man standing before her in the col-

lege student union, but even if she had, she wouldn't have accepted his offer—at least not yet. His inquiry needed to be directed to her father. Heather mustered her resolve. "Well," she said, "I would really prefer that you talked with my dad first."

Then, without giving the fellow a chance to respond, Heather made a beeline for her dormitory. *I'm never going to hear from this guy again*, she thought. *In fact, I'm going to be the laughingstock of the campus.*

Heather has been a willing participant in our family decision to dispense with the dating game. Our choice grew partly out of personal experience: as teenagers, we had encountered some of the drawbacks and dangers of dating. When I (Anne) dated, my heart became emotionally tied to my steady, which resulted in wounds of rejection that lasted for years. We wanted something better for our children.

Courtship is one of the best ways we've found to achieve that goal. If a young man wants to date a young woman, he contacts her father to ask permission. During that first meeting or phone call, the father explains that the family believes in courtship, which means that the young man must be spiritually and financially prepared to marry the young woman if they fall in love—otherwise, he shouldn't even bother to start a relationship. (As for our sons, they know they must meet the same requirements before they can begin courting a young woman.) This means, in effect, that there will be no courtship or dating during the high school years, and perhaps not until after college graduation.

Before you dismiss courtship as impractical, outmoded, or just plain weird, take some time to weigh its benefits against the drawbacks of dating. For starters, dating can be a setup for divorce. The current thinking goes like this: *If I like this guy (or girl), I'll go out with him a few times. If it doesn't work out, we can always break up.* It simply does not make sense to train for a long-term marriage by pursuing what is all too often a series of short-term relationships. Even in a lasting marriage, the baggage left over from previous dating relationships can be frustrating and painful. As Christian parents, we talk a lot about sexual abstinence, but we should also keep in mind the need for emotional abstinence.

Courtship also brings practical benefits. For one thing, bringing Dad into the picture takes the responsibility for saying yes or no to a relationship off a daughter's shoulders. If Heather is not interested in a young man, I (Jim) can break the news gently without damaging their friendship or the young man's walk with Christ.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of courtship is





From a series of photographs by Stuart Freedman of the few remaining "avowed virgins" in rural Albania. In keeping with Albanian tradition, the woman pictured above, Selman Brahim, renounced her femininity at age thirteen when her father died and she assumed the role of head of the family; she is considered to be a man by her relatives and fellow villagers. Some of Freedman's photographs appeared in the November 3, 1996, issue of *The Sunday Review*, the magazine of the *London Independent*.

that it also allows us, as a family, to better understand the person interested in one of our children. Dating means waving goodbye at the door and saying, "Be home by midnight," whereas courtship includes time spent with the entire family. In our home, a young man interested in Heather or our youngest daughter, Catharine, is apt to find himself playing basketball with our twin sons, Ned and Drew, or helping out in the kitchen after dinner.

Our practice may seem like a relic from the 1890s, especially for today's young people in their college years. Indeed, the fellow who wanted to go out with Heather did call our home, but after hearing Jim's explanation of courtship, he opted not to pursue the relationship.

That incident happened nearly six years ago. Since then, we have continued to practice courtship. So far, none of our children is married, but we aren't worried, since we know God has a plan for their lives. Catharine said it best when she described courtship as a process that allows her to "concentrate my energies on doing what God wants me to do, rather than on what I want to do."

[Poem]

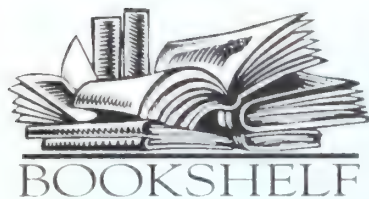
## HISTORY

By Christopher Howell, in the Autumn 1996 issue of *The Gettysburg Review*. Howell is the author, most recently, of *Memory and Heaven*.

At Agincourt King Henry said, "First bastard who runs gets his jewels on a plate," or words to that effect. His sidekick the Duke of Gloucester remarked some movement of the party in a spinney of winter birches off to the left. Several men farted into the pre-combat silence. Archers on the flanks were chattering about the Queen's fey scribe sent along to write the whole thing up. There was more farting because several of the horses had defecated the night before, and then to the very ground beneath their hooves.

All night it had rained as the archers  
drenched the ground beneath their hooves.





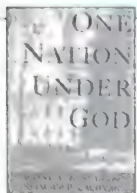
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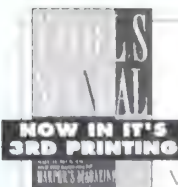
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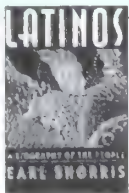
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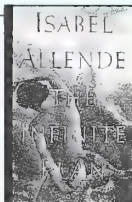
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stakes that fuzzily chivalric Frenchmen would later try to charge through on their blindered and caparisoned war steeds. The horse meat was raw and muddy; though some of it, men swore, was served by fluffy angels in blue hats. In the soup of rain and dung and plowed ground, those who could sleep had thrown down in full armor against inclines of the cold ditches. Some whores from the village came round but the priests ran them off—both facts left out of the scribe's sensible and fervid battle piece scrawled on bleached mule hide and holed up, now, in a vault at the British Museum.

Anyway, it was the moment before the first French charge, after the giggling archers had drawn back their ashwood bows and rained a six-thousand-shaft volley onto the noble armored heads of the French cavalry, deafening hail of ball bearings on a tin roof. Things were quiet as could be then for everyone, after the ringing stopped, when up out of nowhere flew a clutch of white doves, which circled three times between the two poised belligerents in array and, in the scribe's telling, "a-cryd out as one voyse fore to taken each mann merci on hys anymys. And ther was much astonyshment before the charage."

Later, after the wildly retreating French horse had collided with their own infantry tottering headlong the other way, after the English archers had laid down their bows and with giant mallets set to the beturtled knights in all their shit-stained iron, someone remarked the birds again, turned mute, crowlike and aimless as programs fluttering from the darkened galleries of the next six hundred years.

[Epilogues]

## NECROPOLIS

From "The Unknown Soldier," by Luc Sante. Sante read the essay at "(In)Visible Cities," a conference that took place last September at Cooper Union college in Manhattan. Various New Yorkers were asked to portray the city from the point of view of an "urban persona." Sante is the author of *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York*.

**T**he last thing I saw was a hallway ceiling, four feet wide, with a plaster molding that looked like a long row of small fish, each trying

to swallow the one ahead of it. The last thing I saw was a crack of yellow sky between buildings, partly obscured by a line of laundry. The last thing I saw was the parapet, and beyond it the trees. The last thing I saw was his badge, but I couldn't tell you the number. The last thing I saw was a full shot glass, slid along by somebody who clapped me on the back. The last thing I saw was the sedan that came barreling straight at me while I thought, It's okay, I'm safely behind the window of the doughnut shop. The last thing I saw was a boot, right foot, with nails protruding from the instep. The last thing I saw was a turd. The last thing I saw was a cobble. The last thing I saw was night.

I lost my balance crossing Broadway and was trampled by a team of brewery horses. I was winching myself up the side of a six-story house on a board platform with a load of nails for the cornice when the weak part of the rope hit the pulley sideways and got sheared. I lost my way in snowdrifts half a block from my apartment. I drank a bottle of carbolic acid not really knowing whether I meant to or not. I got very cold and coughed and forgot things. I went out to a yard to try and give birth in secret, but something happened. I met a policeman who mistook me for somebody else. I was drunk on my birthday and fell off the dock trying to grab a gold piece that looked like it was floating. I was hanged in the courtyard of the Tombs before a cheering crowd and people clogging the rooftops of buildings, but I still say that rascal had it coming. I stole a loaf of bread and started eating it as I ran down the street, but there was a wad of raw dough in the middle that got caught in my throat. I was supposed to get up early that morning, but I couldn't move. I heard a sort of whistling noise above my head as I was passing by the post office, and that's all I know. I was hustling a customer who looked like a real swell, but when we got upstairs he pulled out a razor. I owed a lot of rent and got put out and that night curled up in somebody else's doorway, and he came home in a bad mood. I ate some oysters I dug up myself. I felt very hot and shaky and strange, and everybody in the shop was looking at me, and I kept trying to tell them that I'd be all right in a minute, but I just couldn't get it out.

I never woke up as the fumes snaked into my room. I stood yelling as he stabbed me again and again. I shot up the bag as soon as I got home, but I thought it smelled funny when I cooked it. I was asleep in the park when these kids came by. I crawled out the window and felt sick looking down, so I just threw myself out and looked up as I fell. I thought I could get warm by burning some newspaper in a soup pot. I went to pieces very slowly and was happy when it finally





from a series of photographs by Maria Miesenberger. Miesenberger reshoots and manipulates family photographs taken during her childhood in Sweden and Austria. Her work will be on display next month at the Silverstein Gallery in New York City. She lives in Stockholm.

stopped. I thought the train was going way too fast, but I kept on reading. I let this guy pick me up at the party, and sometime later we went off in his car. I felt real sick, but the nurse thought I was kidding. I jumped over to the other fire escape, but my foot slipped. I thought I had time to cross the street. I thought the floor would support my weight. I thought nobody could touch me. I never knew what hit me.

They put me in a bag. They nailed me up in a box. They walked me down Mulberry Street followed by altar boys and four priests under a canopy and everybody in the neighborhood singing the "Libera Me Domine." They collected me in pieces all through the park. They laid me in state under the rotunda for three days. They engraved my name on the pediment. They drew my collar up to my chin to hide the hole in my neck. They laughed about me over baked meats and rye whiskey. They didn't know who I was when they fished me out and still didn't know six months later. They held my body for ransom and collected, but by that time they had burned it. They never found me. They threw me in the cement mixer. They heaped all of us into a trench and stuck a monument on top. They cut me up

at the medical school. They weighed down my ankles and tossed me in the drink. They named a dormitory after me. They gave speeches claiming I was some kind of tin saint. They hauled me away in the ashman's cart. They put me on a boat and took me to an island. They tried to keep my mother from throwing herself in after me. They bought me my first suit and dressed me up in it. They marched to City Hall holding candles and shouting my name. They forgot all about me and took down my picture.

So give my eyes to the eye bank, give my blood to the blood bank. Make my hair into switches, put my teeth into rattles, sell my heart to the junkman. Give my spleen to the mayor. Hook my lungs to an engine. Stretch my guts down the avenue. Stick my head on a pike, plug my spine to the third rail, throw my liver and lights to the winner. Grind my nails up with sage and camphor and sell it under the counter. Set my hands in the window as a reminder. Take my name from me and make it a verb. Think of me when you run out of money. Remember me when you fall on the sidewalk. Mention me when they ask you what happened. I am everywhere under your feet. ■



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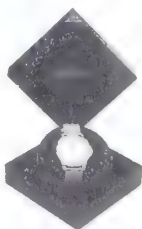
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# PRISONER OF WAR

## The lure of gunfire and the enemy within

BY SCOTT ANDERSON

I've never known precisely what to call it, but this is how it begins: heat, thick tropical heat, still air that smells of sweat and paddy water, and Athuma being led into the hut, the afternoon sun behind her so that she is only a silhouette against the hard light. She moves toward me, emerges from shadow, and I see her, always as if for the first time, a slender woman with long black hair, a floral-print sarong, and that is where I stop it—I've become quite good at stopping it there. But if I am not vigilant, the scene continues. Athuma is in the wicker chair, just four feet away, and then she leans toward me, looks into my eyes—hers are brown with flecks of yellow—and is about to speak, and if I am not vigilant, I hear her voice again.

What I can say is that this remembrance comes when it wants to. I can be content or unhappy, on a crowded street or standing alone, I can be anywhere at any time, and I will suddenly be returned to that hut, all the sounds and smells and tastes there waiting for me, the black silhouette of Athuma fixed in my eye like a sunspot, and until I close off the vision there is the peculiar feeling that I am being asked to try

again to save Athuma, that the events of that day ten years ago have yet to be lived.

The sensation comes on this night, the second of November 1995. I am in Chechnya, standing in the courtyard of a house, trying to count off the artillery against the sky. Normally, this is not difficult—you see the flash and count off, five seconds to a mile, until you hear the blast—but on this night so many shells fall their flashes are like sheet lightning against the low clouds, the roar rolling over the land, a steady white noise of war.

But I am patient when it comes to such things, and I wait for my moment. I spot three quick, nearly overlapping, pulses of light streak out along the base of the clouds, and I begin to count. I count for a long time, so long I imagine I've missed the moment, but at fifty-five seconds I hear it: three soft knocks, little more than taps amid the avalanche of sound.

Fifty-five seconds. Eleven miles. They are shelling Bamut again. It is a small village up in the mountains, a place I think about so much I no longer even refer to it by name. They have shelled it every night I have been in Chech-

*Scott Anderson is a contributing editor of Harper's Magazine. His most recent article, "Looking for Mr. Yapranchi," appeared in the December 1995 issue. He is co-author and co-editor, with Ian Lee Anderson, of War Zones: Voices from the World's Killing Grounds. He is at work on Red Zones, a book about the war in Chechnya, as well as on a novel.*



nya—just a few dozen rounds some nights, several hundred on others. The shelling has never been as heavy as tonight.

As I have done many times these past few days, I travel the path to the village in my mind. Not eleven miles by road, more like thirty-five. The paved road cuts across the broad

plain until it climbs into the foothills. After a time, a narrow dirt track appears, and it leads across the river and into the mountains. At some unmarked spot on this track, perhaps an hour or so past the river, neutral ground is left and the war

zone begins. One is then quite close to the village, maybe just another half hour, but there are mines sometimes, and sometimes the helicopter gunships sneak in over the hills to destroy whatever they find.

The road ends at the village. It is built along the exposed flank of a mountain valley, and the Russians are on the surrounding heights with their tanks and artillery batteries. The way in is also the only way out, but any decision to leave is up to the rebels, and they do not trust outsiders. Since this war began eleven months ago, a number of people have vanished in the village, and there are stories of torture, that some of those missing were buried alive. I have been frightened of the place since I first heard of it. On this night, its name sounds like death to me.

I am both astonished and appalled by what is about to happen. I have come to Chechnya to look for a middle-aged American man who disappeared here seven months ago. He was last seen alive in the village. I did not know this man, and he is dead, of course, but there is a part of me that has not accepted this, that holds to the fantastic notion that he is still alive and I might save him, and in the morning I will go to the village in hopes of finding him.

But this is nothing; who cares if I choose to do something stupid? What is appalling is that I have maneuvered four others into sharing my journey, and on this night, I can no longer ignore the fact that I have done this simply because I need them, each of them, that in the very simple moral equation between my needs and the safety of others, I have chosen myself. Not that this changes much; even now, I feel incapable of stopping what I have engineered.

If I wanted to keep things simple, I would say that this is a story about war, about modern war and the way it is fought. Or I would say

that this is a story about obsession, the dangerous lure of faith and hope. What would be harder for me to explain is that this is a story about truth. Not the truth of the mind—rational, intellectual, able to make order of chaos—but emotional truth, what is known before the mind takes over, what seeps in when the mind relaxes, the truth your heart believes.

Rationally, I know I did not kill Athuma. I was in a difficult situation, and I did what I could under the circumstances to save her. I remind myself of this often. The few people to whom I've told the story reassure me of this.

But there is something about that day I have never told anyone. Before Athuma was led to the hut, I believed I was the one they meant to kill. When the vision comes and I am sent back to that afternoon, my very first sensation upon seeing Athuma is relief, a profound relief because it is only then I understand that I am to live, that it is she who is about to die. And in that moment, there is the blossoming of my own private truth. Emotional, irrational—telling anyone else, perhaps absurd—but whenever I see Athuma's silhouette, I believe that she is coming forward to die in my place, that once again I am being called upon to play a part in her murder.

I don't wish to make too much of this. What happened to me is nothing compared with what happens to other people in war. And, of course, what happened to me is nothing compared with what happened to Athuma.

Yet the events in that hut carved a neat vision in my life. Before I was one way, and afterward I was another. And just as my life before made it inevitable that one day I would come face-to-face with Athuma—some Athuma—so after her it was inevitable that one day I would come to this night in Chechnya.

**I** first went to war because I thought it would be exciting—and I was right. It is the most exciting thing I have ever experienced, a level of excitement so overwhelming as to be impossible to prepare for, impossible ever to forget.

This attraction is not something to be discussed in polite company, of course. Yet I know I am hardly alone in my reaction. For a great number of people, and perhaps especially for those who traditionally have been called upon to wage it—young men—war has always been an object of intense fascination, viewed as life's ultimate test, its most awful thrill. Of all the easy, comfortable aphorisms that have ever been coined about war—that it is hell, that it tries men's souls—I suspect the odd utterance of General Robert E. Lee, made at the Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862, may come

## I KNOW I DIDN'T KILL ATHUMA. THAT I TRIED TO SAVE HER



st to capturing the complicated emotions  
ose who have actually experienced it. "It is  
that war is so terrible," Lee said, gazing  
a valley where thousands of soldiers would  
die, "or we should grow too fond of it."  
at if the guilty attraction endures, it now  
es with a heavier price. This is because the  
ern war zone bears little resemblance to  
of 130, or even 50, years ago. What were  
e the traditional inhabitants of a battle-  
—soldiers, or journalists like myself—to-  
represent only a tiny minority, their num-  
overwhelmed by the purely innocent, the  
ians who find themselves trapped in war's  
On this modern battlefield, comparisons  
he Fredericksburgs and Waterloos and  
dalcansals of history—ritualized slaughters  
ween opposing armies—are largely useless.  
a true comparison, one must reach back to  
at his most primitive, to the time when  
parous hordes swept over the countryside  
ng waste to everything and everyone in  
ir path, when a "battlefield" was defined  
ply by the presence of victims.  
A few simple statistics illustrate this regres-  
n. In the American Civil War, civilian casu-  
es were so low that no one even bothered to  
nt them. From 1900 to 1950, civilians con-  
uted roughly 50 percent of all war-related ca-  
ties. By the 1960s, civilians represented 63

percent of all casualties, and by the 1980s, the  
figure was 74 percent. For every "conventional  
war," such as Operation Desert Storm, that  
pushes the percentage down a fraction, there is a  
Bosnia or a Rwanda that sends it ever upward.  
The world has seen many of these wars. Since  
1980, according to *World Military and Social Ex-  
penditures*, a periodic compendium, 73 wars have  
raged around the globe. "War," of course, is a  
relative term. According to human rights  
groups, last year alone there were 22 "high in-  
tensity conflicts" (defined as 1,000 or more  
deaths), 39 "low intensity conflicts," and 40 "se-  
rious disputes." The 250-odd wars of this century  
have taken a collective toll of 110 million lives.  
There are those who say that the truest mark of  
the last hundred years is not industrialism, or  
the rise of America, or the moon landing, or the  
computer, but the waging of war—that war is  
the greatest art form of our century. Human in-  
genuity, it appears, has perfected the technol-  
gies of death and, like a kid with a new sling-  
shot, cannot help but find targets everywhere.

The result is that today's "hallowed ground"  
is not at all like the pastoral valley Robert E.  
Lee gazed upon at Fredericksburg, is barren of  
the trappings of heroic folly that can be im-  
mortalized by poets and painters. Instead, this  
hallowed ground is a ditch or a filthy alley or a  
cluster of burned homes, and it is inordinately

BOSNIA,  
1993





populated by the elderly, by mothers and their children, by those not quick enough to escape.

To be sure, there are the lucky few who are able to traverse this landscape with a degree of physical immunity (journalists, most obviously, but also soldiers and guerrillas now that most "battle" means the risk-free killing of the defenseless rather than fighting other combatants), but even they cannot arrange an immunity for the soul. If for them war still holds an excitement, it is an excitement that the healthy conscience recognizes as obscene. And if war can still be viewed as life's greatest challenge, it is now less a test of any concept of courage or manhood than of simple human resiliency.

As a child, I always thought of war as something that would eventually find me. The youngest son of an American foreign-aid officer, I was raised in the East Asian nations of South Korea and Taiwan, briefly in Indonesia—"front-line states," as they were called in the 1960s, in the global military crusade against Communism. Although culturally very different, there was a certain continuity to these places: in each, the people lived in thrall of a venal American-allied dictatorship, soldiers ruled the streets under martial law or state-of-siege decrees, and the long-awaited Red invasion, we were constantly told, could come at any moment. In South Korea, soldiers rounded up and imprisoned student demonstrators, then labeled them Communist provocateurs. The entrance to my elementary school in Taiwan was guarded by an enormous antiaircraft gun, two soldiers constantly scanning the skies with binoculars for some sign of the marauding Red Chinese. Every October 10—Double-Ten Day—Chiang Kai-Shek amassed tens of thousands of his troops in Taipei's central square and exhorted them to war, crying, "Back to the Mainland!" as cheers rang and artillery sounded.

This spirit of war was all around me. My father had fought in World War II, had been an eyewitness to the attack on Pearl Harbor. My godfather was an Air Force major. As the Vietnam War escalated in the late '60s, our small American enclave in the hills above Taipei became home to the families of army officers fighting there, their children my new playmates. When I was seven, the first G.I. I knew, George, gave my brother and me green berets from Saigon and took us to the Taipei zoo—this was on his last R&R visit before he was killed in the Mekong Delta.

War, then, came to seem like a natural phenomenon to me, a cyclical storm always massing on the near horizon. Eventually, I was sure, the right conditions would develop, the winds would shift, and war would come to where I was. Because this was in the natural order of things, I was not frightened; if anything, I

awaited it with impatience. I looked forward to Double-Ten Day the way other children did Christmas, and each time I watched Chiang Kai-Shek raise an enfeebled fist in the air and squawk his call to battle, I felt a shivering in my bones and thought to myself, "This time he means it, this time it's really going to happen."

But as fate would have it, war never came to me. Instead, I had to go find it. I was twenty-four and it was August of 1983.

For five months, a girlfriend and I had traveled through Europe, hitchhiking and backpacking, slowly going through the money I had saved from a year of working in restaurants. In Athens, we were down to \$300 on our return tickets to the United States. Neither of us wanted to go home yet, but we differed on how best to forestall it. She was leaning toward picking grapes in Italy or hanging out on a kibbutz in Israel. I was leaning toward Beirut.

Beirut had been in the news a lot that summer. Since the Israeli invasion of Lebanon the previous summer, the city had sunk ever deeper into chaos, a free-fire zone for a bewildering array of armies and private militias. Four Western nations—the United States, Britain, France, and Italy—had sent in troops, the Multinational Peacekeeping Force, to restore order, and yet they were being attacked as well; by August, the American Embassy had been torn in half by a car bomb that killed sixty-three, and a dozen odd Marines had been killed or wounded at their isolated outposts around the city.

I'd heard vague stories about how news agencies and wire services were always looking for "stringers" in dangerous, newsworthy places, and Beirut seemed to fit the bill. Just what "stringing" entailed, I hadn't a clue, but I managed to convince my girlfriend otherwise.

From the moment we stepped off the plane at Beirut airport and I saw the shell-pocked terminal building, the ring of tanks and armored personnel cars, the soldiers holding back a huge throng of civilians desperate to find some way, any way, out of the city, I felt I was in a familiar place, the place of my childhood visions.

And, I must admit, it was just as thrilling as I always imagined it would be. At night, I lay in bed and listened to the crack of sniper fire and the peculiar feline scream of Katyusha rockets, the low rumble of artillery from the battles taking place in the Chouf foothills some fifty miles away. By day, I was a tourist of war. Most mornings, I would leave the relative safety of our hotel on Rue Hamra, a main commercial street of West Beirut, and walk the mile down to the shattered old city center around Martyrs' Square, inch my way as close as possible to the firefights that periodically sprang up along the Green Line, the no-man's-land separating



slim West Beirut from the Christian East. Walking the ruined streets, past buildings that had been blasted so many times they resembled melting houses of wax, hearing the occasional gunshot echo from some unseen sniper, I felt viscerally alive. It was as if I had supernatural powers: I heard the slightest sound from blocks away, my vision seemed telescopic, I could isolate the faintest scents in the air. And through it all came a strange, ethereal quality, a sense that I wasn't really there but viewing everything from a remove, through a lens; and this quality rendered pedestrian issues—of self-preservation, of what was bravery and what was stupidity—moot. I was invisible, invulnerable; no bullet could not find me.

I could justify my journalism, of course: I was looking for a job. As I made the rounds of the different news bureaus, I was greeted with puzzlement, vexed, I imagine, with my attempt—the same contempt I would later feel when meeting dilettantes in war zones. Some jour-

nalists urged me to leave Beirut. Others were quietly encouraging: the level of violence was not yet to a point where they needed another round, but I was to check back if something big happened.

I had been swept up in the madness of the city, but my girlfriend had not. To her, Beirut was just an ever-unfolding tragedy. The sight of the amputees hobbling along the waterfront promenade, the white fear in the faces of the young Marines guarding the new American embassy saddened her to tears, and after a few days she stopped accompanying me on my walks, would stay in the hotel reading books and writing letters.

One day, a firefight that had started down at the Green Line in the early morning gradually moved up the hill toward us; by noon, I estimated it to be about a half-mile away, the concussion causing the hotel room to shake. I had learned to temper my enthusiasm around my girlfriend—it disgusted her—and for an hour or so I pretended to read, trying to invent a plausible excuse to go outside.

"I think I'll check in with Reuters," I said, tossing my book aside. "Want to come?"

She looked up from her letter writing. She was not the least bit fooled. "Go ahead."

With guilty pleasure, I left the hotel and started down Rue Hamra, which was oddly deserted, in the direction of the shooting. When I came to Clemenceau Place, I stopped.

The small park had once been beautiful but

had long ago been destroyed, most of its trees shorn to stumps by shellfire. I had walked through Clemenceau Place many times on my wanderings to the old city center, another half-mile on, and there were usually vendors and children, old men lolling on the grass. On this day there was no one.

The gunfire sounded very close, and I studied the buildings on the far side of the park for snipers. For the first time since arriving in Beirut, I felt a glimmer of dread, made stronger somehow by the bright sunlight and heavy stillness of the leaves in the few remaining trees. I decided to go back, but as I turned, I saw an Arab man standing perhaps twenty feet

away. I was startled that I hadn't noticed him before. He wore a long white robe, appeared to be about forty, and he, too, was staring across the park, as if waiting for some sign.

I don't know who stepped first, but without words passing, we started through the park together.

We walked at the same

speed, separated by some twenty feet, and out of the corner of my eye I saw the white of his robe, and it encouraged me.

We had gone only a very short distance, maybe thirty paces, when the white of his robe slipped from my vision. I stopped and looked over to him. He was standing still, his head bent forward, and I saw that he was working his lips furiously, licking them, biting them, the way some insane people do. Then he began to walk in a small, tight circle, his left leg kicking out, his right dragging slightly, his lips still moving but producing no sound. After his second or third turn on the walkway, I noticed a small red spot on his robe, over his heart, and I saw how this spot grew each time he turned to face me. After five or six circles, he abruptly sat down on the concrete, the force causing his head to jerk, his legs splayed out before him. With the thumb and forefinger of both hands, he pinched the fabric of his robe on either side of the spreading red spot and pulled it away from his chest, as if it were a stain he did not want to have touch his skin.

I felt rooted to the ground. I knew that I should either go to him or run, get out of Clemenceau Place, but I was incapable of deciding. Then the man fell onto his left side, his hands not breaking his fall, his fingers still clutching the fabric, and I knew he was dead from the way his body settled on the concrete. I turned and walked back the way we had come.

As I returned to the hotel, I tried to find

## I FOUND WAR TO BE AS THRILLING AS I IMAGINED IT WOULD BE



meaning in what had happened. I had just watched a person die, and I knew it had to mean something, but no matter how hard I tried, I simply could not imbue the event with much significance. We had walked together across the park, and a bullet had come, and it had found him and it had not found me, and he had died and I had not. That was all.

It took me some time to realize that this—the sheer lack of meaning in what had happened—was the lesson. War's first horror is not that people die for perverse reasons, for a cause, but that they die for no discernible reason at all. They die because they guess wrong. They seek shelter in buildings when they should flee

the ache in your knees, then in your upper chest, and before long you can start imagining that it is inside you and will not leave. I wonder if this is why people go mad during bombardments; not the fear of a quick death, but the shell finding you, but the fear of a slow death, the sense that the constant thrumming through your body is inflicting violence from within. And in Chechnya, these thoughts come from eleven miles away, from perfect safety.

The courtyard I am standing in is an expanse of concrete enclosed by an eight-foot brick wall. Along the far wall is a fallow flower bed across the concrete and step onto the bare earth. The vibrations are much softer here, barely



CHECHNYA,  
1995

onto open ground, they stay on open ground when they should hide in buildings, they trust in their neighbors when they should fear them, and none of it is knowable—nothing is revealed as foolish or wrong or naive—until it is too late. All that the death in Clemenceau Place meant was that the Arab man should not have attempted to cross the park that afternoon, and it was this very paucity of meaning that stunned me, that I wished not to see.

Others have likened the sound of an artillery bombardment to the sky being ripped apart. I don't know. What I can say is that after a time it no longer even seems like a sound but something animate. It travels through the ground, and you first feel

it, then the vibration, then the sound, then the sight. I lean my back against the wall, soothed by the stillness.

Ryan comes out of the house. I realize by the way he peers around the courtyard that he can't see me in the dark. For a moment I think he will go back inside, but then he sits on the steps, leans onto his knees.

I am not in the mood to deal with Ryan. He is twenty-two—a kid, really, considering what I have brought him—and a couple of years ago he left his native Southern California to scratch out an existence teaching English in Moscow. When I offered him \$150 a day to come to Chechnya as my interpreter, he jumped at the chance. He is a good guy, intelligent and sweet-natured, but he left behind a pleasant life in Moscow, a girlfriend he wanted



harry, and he has no idea what he has gotten himself into. I have not told him that he has chosen to make this journey simply because no one else would.

He should feel grateful to Ryan, but I don't. In fact, he irritates me. I have attributed this to his talkativeness, his fierce determination to fill every minute of his days with words. When he first arrived here, I tried to explain that the most important safeguard on a battlefield was to listen, but Ryan has either been unwilling or unable to heed this advice—and on this matter I have not been patient. Now I tell him to be quiet fifteen or twenty times a day, and the more he talks the less I do.

After some minutes, I step from the flower bed and walk softly across the courtyard. I'm only a few feet away when Ryan jumps, startled by my presence. "Whoa," he says. "Where were you?" I don't answer.

He moves over on the step, clearing a space for me, but I remain standing, lean against the iron railing. I feel the ache in my knees again—the vibrations in the metal rail against my shoulder. "They're really blasting the shit out of it, aren't they?" Ryan says.

I don't answer.

"It's never been this bad before. Are they doing air strikes?"

"Tanks and artillery," I reply. "No planes."

I'm quite sure he doesn't like me—how could he like someone who tells him to shut up twenty times a day?—but Ryan maintains appearances. More than anything, I think he is pressed by how I watch and listen out here, how I imagine me to be something of an idiot savant when it comes to gauging danger.

He has no way of realizing that, in fact, I know very little. Even though it is elementary physics, I do not know, for example, if the sounds I hear, which I carefully count off each night, come when the shells are launched or when they explode. I don't know if the count is thrown off by wind or topography. I don't really know if what I am hearing are tank or artillery rounds. And I still imagine that knowing these things could be important, that knowledge alone might somehow keep us safe.

"Do you believe the stories about them burying people alive?" Ryan asks.

"They're rumors," I say.

"I know, but do you think they're true?"

He is apprehensive, of course, as we all are, and it would take very little from me to reassure him, to at least take the edge off.

"How would I know?" I say. "How in the fuck would I know?"

One night six weeks ago, I sat on the back of a houseboat on a Texas lake with the twenty-nine-year-old son of the man I have come to

look for. We sat there for many hours, drinking beer and talking—about women and football and Mexico, only occasionally about his father. At around 4:00 A.M., after a long silence, both of us staring out at the black water, he turned to me.

"I don't want you to go to Chechnya," he said. "It's not worth it. My father's dead. It's not worth someone else getting killed."

The son had recently ended his own four-month search for his father in Chechnya, and over the course of a few days in Texas we had become close. Now he stared down at the beer can clasped in his hand, then took a gulp from it. "At least promise me you won't do anything crazy."

He was not used to talking to another man in this heartfelt way, and neither was I. I drank from my beer and looked out at the water. "I promise."

In the six weeks since that night, I have offered a number of variations on this promise. To my family and friends, it was that I would be careful, that I would not do anything foolish. To those who knew the details of the story, it was more specific, that I would not attempt to reach the village. I was asked to make this promise so many times that I began to deliver it preemptively—"well, I'm certainly not going to take any chances"—reinforcing the point with an incredulous little laugh, as if the very idea was bizarre. And the truth is, before I came here I believed my promises.

"What if they start shelling while we're there?" Ryan asks.

I turn to him. He is looking up at me, moon-faced. This is something I haven't considered. In the time we've been in Chechnya, they have never shelled the village during the day, always at night, and we have planned our journey to be well away before dark. But they've never shelled the village as they are doing tonight, and it finally occurs to me that it might be the prelude to a ground assault.

"Get into a ditch," I say. "If there isn't a ditch, get to a low wall, the closest low wall you see."

I think of telling him more—of explaining why he should go to a low wall instead of a high one, that if he can see the explosions it means that he is against an exposed wall and needs to get around to the other side—but I know he won't remember any of it if shells start coming in. I doubt he'll even remember the lit-

**A BULLET HAD  
COME, AND IT  
HAD FOUND HIM  
AND NOT ME**



tle I've said, and I have an image of him standing in the middle of a road—slack-jawed and paralyzed—as the world around him disappears.

"You have to understand something," I tell him. "You will be on your own. In an artillery attack, everyone is on their own. If you freeze and stay in the open, I won't come out for you, no one will come out for you. It's not like in the movies. Do you understand?"

Ryan nods, but in his eyes I see a hint of bemusement, as if he is trying to be respectful and suitably grave but not really buying any of it. I am reminded of what I must have been like at his age, politely enduring the lectures of the correspondents and photographers in Beirut. I'm sure I had the same reaction, the same expression. At twenty-two, you can't conceive of dying.

But this is a different situation than Beirut—Ryan is here because I am here, he is following me—and his expression means quite a bit more. In his eyes, he is saying, "I know you won't leave me out there, I know you'll come out for me," and that smugness, that juvenile conviction that I will protect him, angers me.

It is then that I understand the deeper source of my irritation with Ryan. I am irritated by how easily and blithely he left his girlfriend, his happy, pauper's life in Moscow, and placed his fate in the hands of someone like me for \$150 a day. I cannot possibly blame him for this—I would have done the same at his age—but I am infuriated by his trust in me.

For a long time, I did not learn anything worth knowing by going to war, and then, finally, I did. It happened on a November evening in 1986 in Uganda, maybe an hour before dark, when, glancing out the window of a moving car, I saw an old man, thin and bare-chested, standing in an overgrown field, swinging a machete.

I think what I first noticed was the intensity with which he worked. In Uganda, as everywhere in the tropics, people laboring in the fields pace themselves for the heat, maintain a slow, steady rhythm, but this old man wielded his machete with a passionate energy, arcing it high over his head, swinging it down hard. I asked my driver to stop the car and, from the open window, watched the old man for a few minutes. Then I got out and started across the field toward him.

The grass was very high, almost to my chest, and I remember thinking it odd how uneven

the ground was, how it kept crunching under my feet. Hearing my approach, the man stopped his work and watched me. I saw that he was not as old as I had thought, perhaps only forty-five or so, his face and body aged prematurely by peasant life. I couldn't read his expression—not friendly, not curious, really no expression at all beyond a steady stare. I came to the space he had cleared and saw the two piles he was making—one of clothing, another of bones—and I understood then that we were standing in a killing field, that the crunching

I'd felt under my feet must have been the breaking of human bones.

I had come to Uganda because my older brother Jon Lee, and I were writing a book together. We had already collaborated on one book, and this time we decided to compile an oral history of modern warfare, spending a year going from

one war zone to the next interviewing soldiers and guerrillas and the civilians caught between them. With a meager advance from a publisher, we packed our bags and set out, to Northern Ireland, to the Sudan, now to Uganda, where one cycle of civil war had recently ended and another had just started.

Beginning a few miles north of the capital Kampala was the Luwero Triangle, a verdant patch of farmland that had once been home to one million members of the Baganda tribe. Between 1981 and early 1986, it had been at the vortex of a civil war that drifted into genocide as the Ugandan military had sealed off the Triangle and tried to erase it from existence, razed villages, murdering an estimated quarter-million people, and sending the rest into the bush or to concentration camps. When Jon Lee and I arrived in October 1986, the old government was gone, the rebels were in power, and the survivors were starting to return. They came back to a place where nature had reclaimed the fields, where their shattered homes had settled into mud, and in every village they built a memorial to the horror that had been visited on them, a display of the bones and skulls of their fallen.

For several weeks, we made periodic sojourns into the Triangle, interviewing survivors, chronicling the atrocities, watching the harvest of the dead. Everywhere were people carrying bundles of bones on their backs, on their heads, hauling them to communal places where the remains were laid out with mathematical orderliness—tibias in one row, spinas in another, skulls arrayed in descending order

## I AM FURIOUS THAT HE HAS PLACED HIS FATE IN MY HANDS



size. The survivors then walked among these  
piles, studying first one skull and then an-  
other, hoping, it seemed, that they might  
 somehow recognize those that belonged to  
 their own families. It was as if, in their state of  
 stunned shock, they had reverted to what  
 they knew: gathering from the fields, carrying  
 to market, examining the yield.

With Jon Lee up north, tracking the newest  
pile of war, I had decided to make one more  
trip into the Triangle. It was while leaving,  
heading back to Kampala with another tape  
collection of atrocities, that I noticed the man  
in the field with his machete.

There are things about that evening I can-  
not explain. The man and I never spoke, but I  
 intuitively knew a good deal about him. I knew  
 he had just returned to the Triangle, that the  
 killing field was his land, that he was looking  
 for his family. I began to help him.

This was not easy, because there is nothing  
 systematic or orderly about a killing field.  
 Amid the weeds, bits of rotted cloth were  
 strewn like garbage, tamped into the earth by  
 the rains, and the bones lay scattered without  
 pattern—a pelvic bone here, two skulls there. I  
 remember thinking that it was pointless, that  
 we would never be able to find what the farmer  
 was looking for, but then I saw that he had a  
 system. The bones he ignored, just threw them  
 into the pile. It was the clothes he studied.  
 Each time his slashing revealed a piece of  
 cloth, he would lift it with the tip of his ma-  
 chete and scrutinize it for a familiar pattern be-  
 fore throwing it on the pile and going on.

I found a stick and began to do the same. I  
 could poke at the cloth until it came free from  
 the earth or the bones it encased, then pick it  
 up with the end of the stick and carry it to  
 him. He would stop his labors to look it over,  
 maybe scrape off some dirt to see the pattern,  
 and then he would turn away without a word,  
 and I'd drop the cloth on the pile and go back  
 to my spot.

We went on like that for a long time, maybe  
 thirty or forty minutes. The sun dropped to the  
 horizon line, and the land started to get that heavy  
 old light that comes to the tropics in the  
 evening. I remember thinking how beautiful it  
 was out there, how peaceful despite what had  
 happened, as if the land were trying to heal it-  
 self, and then I realized I wasn't hearing the  
 rustle of the machete anymore, and I straight-  
 ened out of the tall grass and turned toward the  
 farmer. He was about thirty feet away, standing  
 stock-still and staring at me. A piece of brown  
 and white cloth hung from the tip of his ma-  
 chete, and even from that distance I could see it  
 was part of a woman's dress, that he had found  
 his wife's dress. In his eyes was a hatred deeper

than any I had ever felt, a rage without end, and  
 I realized it wasn't passing through me, it wasn't  
 as if I happened to be where his eyes were fixed:  
 the hatred was directed at me, meant for me.

I didn't know what to do, so I didn't do any-  
 thing. I didn't go to him, I didn't speak, I don't  
 think I even looked sad for him. The most I  
 could do was avert my gaze, stare off across the  
 field. Then I turned and went back to the car  
 and told my driver to take me to Kampala. I  
 know I didn't look back, but sometimes I  
 imagine I did, and in this false memory, the  
 farmer is watching me go, the scrap of his  
 wife's dress dangling from his blade, and across  
 the expanse of the sunstruck field I feel the  
 burn of his hatred.

And here, finally, was something worth  
 learning. War is all about hatred, and the ha-  
 tred between combatants is only the easiest  
 kind. At that moment of discovery, I believe  
 the farmer hated all the world, not just the  
 men who had murdered his family: he hated  
 me for being a witness, hated himself for hav-  
 ing survived, hated his wife for dying and leav-  
 ing him alone. After that evening, I under-  
 stood that it is impossible to go through a war  
 and not learn how to hate.

**E**very morning in Chechnya I awaken  
 with a start, instantly alert, and this  
 morning is no different. Out the win-  
 dow, I see the blue-black of dawn. I stare up at  
 the ceiling and listen. Somewhere far off is the  
 sound of a rooster. The shelling has stopped. I  
 think of who will be making the trip today,  
 three of us in this house, two others sleeping a  
 half-mile away. I estimate the time to be 5:00  
 A.M. We are to leave at 8:00.

I go to the basin and throw water on my  
 face, then walk through the house. All is  
 bathed in the milky wash of first light. I pass  
 Ryan. He is sprawled on the bed, snoring.  
 Nothing interrupts his sleep.

The front room holds a table with four chairs  
 and the narrow cot where Stanley sleeps. He is  
 on his back, perfectly still, his hands folded on  
 his chest. Every time I've seen him asleep he is  
 in this position, as if he doesn't move at all dur-  
 ing the night. Stanley is forty-six, ten years old-  
 er than I am, an American living in Paris. He  
 arrived in Moscow two weeks ago wearing an  
 all-black outfit—black hiking boots, black  
 jeans, black shirt, black jacket, black knit cap—  
 and he has not changed out of it since.

Our first meeting was marked by a certain  
 mutual wariness. I knew Stanley had a reputa-  
 tion for taking chances, a war photographer who  
 liked to get as close as possible to his subject  
 matter, and his manner at that first meeting—  
 his low-pulse calm, the watchful stare of his



eyes. I think he wonders if he might get killed in Chechnya. I knew he was wondering the same thing about me. I think we both saw reflections of ourselves in the other, and this was both good and bad: we could count on the other to watch and listen, to know what to do in a bad situation, but it wasn't like there was going to be safety in numbers on this trip. Whatever affinity

## I HAVE STARTED TO CARRY TALISMANS INTO WAR ZONES

exists between us does not translate into a need to share personal information. What we talk about, when we talk, is the wars we have been to and where this one is headed.

Before we got to Chechnya, I had no intention of trying to reach the village; the journey was impossible, insane. But, as often happens in these sorts of situations, there occurred a confluence of events, of coincidences, that began to make it seem possible—and then, quite quickly, what had seemed merely possible began to feel like destiny. I happened to meet a rebel liaison who said the journey could be arranged, who even wrote out a coded message of introduction for me to present to the village commander. Then I happened to meet Alex, a relief worker with a four-wheel-drive ambulance and a stockpile of medical supplies, who agreed to attempt a “mercy mission” into the village, with us—Stanley, Ryan, and me—going along on the pretense of documenting the humanitarian effort. With such an extraordinary convergence of good luck, how could I not go?

Of course, riding this wave of good fortune meant overlooking certain details. The man I was looking for had also gone to the village with an interpreter and rebel credentials. He, too, had gone in an ambulance laden with medical supplies. And he had gone with an insurance factor I could not hope to arrange: two doctors who were known in the village. None of it had helped; the doctors and the interpreter had simply disappeared as well.

As the days here pass, though, it has become increasingly easy to forget all this. A kind of resignation has settled upon us. Events are happening of their own accord, momentum has built to such a degree that there are no longer any decisions to be made. Whether due to destiny or some kind of group psychosis, we are being propelled forward; the time for debate and reason has slipped away.

In the front room of the house, I quietly pull a chair out from the table. It makes a creak when I sit, and I glance over at Stanley. He is a

light sleeper, given to popping up at the slightest sound, but the noise doesn't rouse him.

My notebook is on the table, and I flip through the pages until I find the encoded letter of introduction from the rebel liaison. It is not really a letter but one word written in black ink on a yellow Post-it note, with a couple of odd, Arabic-looking symbols at the end of a word and three quick dots above it.

It suddenly occurs to me that the code's meaning is unknown to us, that our “safe passage” note to the village commander could actually say something very different, could even be our execution order. In this new light I study what has been written. Why three dots? Maybe three dots mean “friend” and two mean “foe.” Or maybe it's just the reverse. Maybe the liaison meant to make only two, but his hand slipped and left a mark that wasn't supposed to be there. Maybe the dots don't mean anything at all and what I should really be focusing on are the Arabic-looking symbols. I find it both remarkable and humiliating that my future might be decided by a word hastily scrawled on a Post-it note, but there is no choice in the matter and finally I give up.

I turn to a blank page in my notebook and take up my pen.

Many years ago, my brother, far more experienced in war than I, tried to teach me to calculate the risks before going into a battle zone, to arrive at a percentage chance that something bad might happen. “Your cutoff should be 25 percent,” Jon Lee had told me. “If it's higher than 25 percent, you don't do it.”

It wasn't a true equation, of course—just hunches and intuition, guesses contrived to look like math—and I'd never had much faith in my ability to weigh factors properly, but on this morning I try.

I try to imagine the chance that the Russians will attack the road while we're on it and decide on 10 percent each way: 20 percent. I try to imagine the chance that the rebels in the village will think we are spies. Here, at least there is some empirical evidence to work with—those who have gone to the village and disappeared. I decide on 50 percent.

Seventy percent. I have never done anything anywhere near 70 percent.

I decide these numbers are way too high. I cross them out and start again. Five percent for the drive each way, 30 percent for the village: 40 percent. Still too high. Five percent total for the drive, 25 percent for the village: 30 percent. Out of curiosity, I calculate the odds of being unlucky at Russian roulette—a little less than 17 percent—and then decide the whole exercise is a waste of time, that either something will happen or it won't.



ut my fatalism wavers. I stare at the two  
es of paper in front of me, the word in blue  
on the Post-it note, my calculations on the  
e. I turn in the chair and look at Stanley.  
n though he is asleep, I am surprised that  
cannot feel my stare, that some unconscious  
m doesn't trigger him awake. I slowly press  
inst the chair back until it creaks. I wait for  
eyes to snap open, for him to bolt up in the  
and meet my gaze.

I believe that if Stanley wakes up right now,  
ill tell him we're not going to do it. I believe  
ill show him the numbers in my notebook,  
plain that we might die over what is written  
the Post-it note, tell him that it was a crazy  
a, that I am frightened. But Stanley doesn't  
ke up, and I lack the courage to make him.

**A**t some point, I began to take relics  
with me when going into war zones.

It started unconsciously—a  
shell here, a girlfriend's silver earring  
ere—but my collection steadily grew  
til it filled a small plastic bag tucked  
o a corner of my rucksack. I think at  
st I carried these things because they  
minded me of the world outside of war,  
all and lightweight links to my normal  
e; it was comforting to fiddle with an  
d Budweiser bottle cap or a Lion Brand  
atchbox or a familiar stone bead when  
was bored or lost, when I was waiting  
r something to happen or something to  
d in a dangerous place.

Gradually, though, I saw that my relics  
ere becoming talismans. I developed  
e habit of carrying some of them in the  
ft front pocket of my trousers, occasion-  
ly replacing them with others from my  
astic bag. I knew this was a bad sign, for  
meant that I was inventing good luck  
o keep me safe, that my sense of immu-  
ity was gone.

Late one night in mid-January 1987, I  
y on a deck chair beside the pool of the  
Galle Face Hotel in Colombo, the princ-  
al city of Sri Lanka, smoking cigarettes  
nd staring up at the fronds of palm trees,  
rashing and black against the sky. In  
y left front pocket was an American bi-  
entennial quarter, the key to an apart-  
ent I no longer lived in, and a tiny  
nteater figurine made from yellow rub-  
er. Behind my head was a stone seawall  
gainst which the Indian Ocean—turbu-  
ent and at high tide—rhythmically  
rashed.

The Galle Face, built at the height of  
he British empire, was a pile of ma-  
ogany and rattan, slow-turning fans and

ocean breezes, but in 1987 the civil war in Sri  
Lanka was entering its fourth year and the  
tourists had long since abandoned "The Pearl of  
Asia." Now the Galle Face and the other luxury  
hotels along the Colombo waterfront were vir-  
tually shuttered, their lobbies filled with forlorn  
maids and bellhops and reservation clerks. On  
afternoons, my brother and I would sit by the  
Galle Face pool, the only charges for the five  
uniformed attendants there.

The first time I climbed the seawall and pre-  
pared to dive into the ocean the attendants be-  
seached me to stop. It was dangerous to swim  
there, they said, there were reefs and sharks,  
strong currents that could sweep me out into  
the shipping lanes. I looked out at the sea. The  
waves were high, cresting at eight or ten feet,  
and it was true that no one was in the water. I  
told the attendants I would be fine and dove  
in. On that first day, I went out only a short

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riding the swells, and when I turned, I saw the five of them in a row behind the seawall, staring at me. I waved and they all waved back.

It became a daily ritual, and each day I went out farther, out to where I could begin to feel the current pulling me away, and where I had to struggle a little harder to get back. And each day the attendants and I exchanged our reassuring waves across the water.

I could not explain to them that I went into the ocean because there I felt in control over what happened to me. At least in the ocean I knew the dangers I faced, and the effort to stay calm, to override the fear of riptides and sharks and deep water, was an act of free will and a measure of power. How could I possibly explain this to the attendants? For them, caught in a country at war, their futures and their children's futures becoming bleaker by the day, such a needless tempting of fate could be viewed only as an absurd extravagance. Better that they regarded me as an unusual athlete or a friendly fool.

Earlier that night, I had set out across the city in a restless search for diversion and had ended up at the former Hyatt hotel. With its vast vacant atrium and ascending tiers of empty rooms, the hotel had the feel of a great mausoleum that no one visited, its gloom deepened by a spirit of desperate optimism: piped Indian pop music—frenetic and reedy—drifted on the still air, and at various intervals in the hollow building teams of cleaning women rubbed its marble and gold to a high polish, as if preparing for a party.

There were four customers in the lounge, three Asian businessmen at a table and a white man sitting alone at the bar. He was in his mid-thirties, with short blond hair, and he perked up at the sight of me, as if he had been awaiting my arrival. I sat a few stools away, ordered a beer, and within seconds he was at my elbow, his hand extended.

"New in?" he asked. "Where are you posted?"

His name was James, a thirty-year-old Briton, a mercenary pilot for the Sri Lankan government. It was an open secret that for more than a year the government had employed several dozen mercenaries—or "contract officers"—to run their air war against the Tamil Tiger guerrillas, and that it was now in the process of hiring more; James, in Colombo on a five-day R&R, had assumed I was one of the new arrivals. Although a bit disappointed to learn otherwise, he chose to make the best of it; it was not like he was going to find anyone else to talk to that night.

He told me that he flew a helicopter gunship and that his particular beat was the Jaffna la-

goon on the northern tip of the island. He placed him at the center of one of the most crucial battlegrounds. The Tigers had held the narrow Jaffna peninsula for over ten years and had repelled every army offensive against it, but they had one huge vulnerability: all their supplies, from food to bullets to medicine, had to come in by sea. A vital route across the ten-mile expanse of the Jaffna lagoon. In the past year, James and his fellow contract officers had turned the lagoon's width into a shooting gallery.

"Anything that tries to go over," he said, "we kill it."

My meeting James was serendipitous, ever since arriving in Sri Lanka, my brother and I had tried to devise some way to get to Jaffna. With the army controlling the peninsula neck, we had been told that the only possibility was aboard a Tiger supply boat trying to run the lagoon, but we'd also been told that such a venture would be extremely risky and that the mercenary gunships were killing anyone they saw. After several beers that evening in the old Hyatt, James came up with a plan.

"Here's how we can work it," he said, putting his hand on my shoulder. "We'll set a prearranged time for you to go over and come back, and I'll just stay out of that zone. It would have to be a very small window, of course, but as long as you keep to schedule there shouldn't be any problem."

There was something both touching and ironic about this offer. Watching James's earnest face as he awaited my reaction, I knew that even more than wanting to help me he wanted to protect me. But I also thought of all the things that could go wrong and throw us off schedule: a flat tire, a flooded boat engine, a long-wind interview in Jaffna—how the smallest misstep could set into motion a course of events whereby this lonely man in the cavern of a hotel would, through no fault of his own, slip down from the clouds to become our destroyer. We there's never a shortage of irony in war. As it was, all I could do was thank James for his offer and tell him I would consider it.

But walking back to the Galle Face that night, I had become aware of an odd discomfort in my chest. It was not an entirely new sensation, but on this night I felt it acutely, as or might feel the onset of a flu before it strikes. While lying in the lounge chair beside the darkened pool, staring up at the thrashing palm trees, I realized that I believed I might soon die.

At first, I was tempted to attribute this feeling to my conversation with James, my apprehensions about running the lagoon, but I knew it ran far deeper and had been with me for some time. It was why I had begun to carry tal-



ans, perhaps even why I dove off the sea-  
l to play with fate in the ocean's currents. It  
to do with punishment.

finally understood that I was not merely an  
erver of war and never had been. I had al-  
s been a participant—by my very presence I  
I been a participant—and war will always

I a way to punish those  
o come to know it. I had  
ched people die. I had  
lked through killing  
ds and felt human bones  
ak beneath my feet. I  
I picked up the skulls of  
rdered children and re-  
anged them with an eye  
photographic composi-  
n. I had cajoled or in-  
nicated or charmed

ores of people into revealing their most inti-  
te horrors, and then I had thanked them per-  
nctorily and walked away. If I was to be pun-  
ed—and there were charms in my pocket to  
estall this, there was an ocean behind my  
ad to hasten this—it would be because I de-  
ved it. God knows I deserved to be punished  
the things I'd seen.

As it turned out, my brother and I did not  
tempt the Jaffna lagoon. Instead, we jour-  
yed east, to the marshes and rice paddies  
ong the windward coast, to the Tigers fight-  
g there, to Athuma.

**A**t 7:45 A.M., minutes before we are to  
set out for the village, I tell Ryan and  
Stanley that I am going to the town  
quare for cigarettes and slip away from the  
ouse. The day has broken cool and the air is  
ear. By noon, the dust will rise to lie over the  
own like a shroud, but for now it is still wet  
ith dew, and in the distance the snowcapped  
aucasus mountains shine like glass.

In the square, the kiosk women are just set-  
ng up for the day, throwing open the wood  
utters of their booths or laying out their  
ares on the sidewalk, blankets wrapped tight-  
over their shoulders. I buy three packs of  
arlboros and push them into my coat pocket.

At one end of the square is a high school  
nd, next to it, a small park, its entrance domi-  
ated by peeling portraits of men I do not rec-  
gnize. I have passed the place often in the past  
ew days, and on this morning I wander inside.

It is a very modest park and suffering from  
eglect—the paving stones of its path are shat-  
tered, and nothing has been pruned or trimmed  
n a very long time—but at its center I come to  
massive, marble monument, a small eternal  
lame burning at the base. It is a memorial to  
he town's dead from World War II, and in the

black stone are chiseled scores of names.

Standing before the flame and the list of war  
dead, I suddenly find that I am praying. I  
haven't prayed in twenty-five years and am not  
really sure anymore how it is done, if I'm sup-  
posed to preface it in some way or direct it to  
some god in particular. In any event, it is a self-

ish prayer; for the soul of  
my dead mother, for the  
safety of my companions  
and myself on this journey.

I hear laughter behind  
my back, and I turn to see  
two schoolgirls sitting on a  
nearby bench, watching  
me and giggling. I am em-  
barrassed that they know  
what I am doing, that even  
though I haven't bowed

my head or closed my eyes, they know I am  
praying. I stoop down to pick up a pebble from  
the path, then leave, finishing the prayer in my  
mind as I walk. In the left front pocket of my  
trousers is a fossilized shark's tooth from Flori-  
da, the keys to my apartment in New York, and  
a tiny 1973 two-kopeck coin I found in the  
gutter of a Moscow street. At the entrance to  
the park, I slide the pebble into my pocket, one  
more charm to keep me safe.

In my absence, the ambulance has arrived at  
the house, and my companions stand in the  
street, waiting for me. The relief worker, Alex,  
is a tall, rail-thin Hungarian in his early thir-  
ties, an Oxford divinity student, of all things,  
on leave to perform rescue work in Chechnya.  
There is something in his quirky, rather dandy-  
ish manner—his vaguely British accent and  
soft stutter, the long woolen scarf he habitually  
wears—that seems both charming and brave in  
its incongruity with this place. On this morn-  
ing, he appears to be in high spirits—clean-  
shaven and jaunty—and he bounds over the  
dirt road to shake my hand.

"Nice weather for it," he says, glancing up at  
the blue sky, "but I suspect we'll find mud in  
the mountains." He turns to me, still smiling  
his crooked smile. "In any event, perhaps we  
should take a closer look at this note from the  
liaison. Wouldn't want to walk into a trap of  
some sort, would we?"

Alex says this without any hint of real con-  
cern, and I take the Post-it note from my back  
pocket. He studies the single word for a mo-  
ment, his fingers distractedly playing with the  
frame of his horn-rimmed glasses, then hands it  
to Aslan.

Aslan reminds me of other young men I  
have known in other wars, the native "fixer"  
hired by Western visitors—journalists, relief  
workers—to get them in and out of dangerous

**I DESERVED TO  
BE PUNISHED  
FOR THE THINGS  
I HAD SEEN**



places. He is in his mid twenties, with dark hair, sunglasses, and a black imitation leather jacket. Others have dressed differently, of course, have been Asian or African or Latin, but what unites them all is a cocky bemusement at our ignorance and bad ideas. Aslan glances quickly at the note and shrugs.

"I don't know what it means. It's in code."

"Nothing for it, then," Alex says, merrily. "We'll just have to go and find out."

And so we set off, the boxes of medical supplies—gauze bandages, glucose solution, anti-septic wash—jouncing and sliding in the ambulance bay. We follow the path of my imagination: over the plain, into the foothills, and then there is the dirt track, the river, and we are in the mountains. The day is bright, a blinding light reflecting off the snowcapped peaks to the south, but the small valleys below us are cloaked in morning shadow and fog. We are still on neutral ground, but that doesn't mean much here, and out of habit I watch the

his own private ambulance on a ridgeline at the top of the world.

About an hour after crossing the river, Alex, sitting in the front passenger seat, suddenly points down the hillside. We are skirting a mountain, somewhere near the unmarked frontier between neutral ground and war, and the pasture below is a haphazard cluster of large, rectangular stones.

"They look like ruins," Alex says excitedly. "Old ruins."

As Aslan continues to steer along the track the rest of us peer out the windows. It is a strange sight, this jumble of square-edged rocks in the middle of nowhere, but not strange enough to dispel our stupor of silence.

It was a very hot day. The air was still and thick with the smell of paddy weeds and sweat, and when Athuma was led to the hut, the sun was behind her so that for a moment she was only a silhouette against the



RWANDA,  
1994

valleys, look for a flash of refracted light in a dark recess, a sudden swirl in a fog cloud, for some sign that a trolling gunship is rising out of the depths to meet us. But there is no flash or swirl, and the only sounds are those of the wind and the grinding of the ambulance engine. We pass no one on the track—no cars, no homes—and we do not talk. It is as if each of us is making this journey utterly alone, each in

light. That is how I remember it, how it looks when I return to it.

The day had started off very differently. In fact, it started the way I, as a child, had imagined war would be but war had never been so grand, cinematic. The night before, a messenger had come with our instructions, and at noon Jon Lee and I had walked into the marketplace of the government-held town and two Tig



rillas had suddenly appeared beside us on  
r motorcycles, motioning us to get on.  
re had been a wild, careening ride, down  
streets and narrow alleys, dodging army  
blocks and personnel carriers, until finally  
burst free from the town and were in the  
tryside, speeding past farmhouses and rice  
dies and palm trees, and my life had never  
so much like an adventure.

he sensation lasted for a time, through the  
a across the lagoon in the motorized canoe,  
ough the half-hour drive on the other side,  
amed in the back of a battered Jeep with a  
dozen Tigers. It ended at an old farmhouse  
len in a grove of trees. It ended the moment I  
Kumarappa.

He was twenty-seven years old, the Tiger  
commander for the region, with a pistol on his  
a potbelly, and dark, dead eyes. His young  
owers—weighted down by weapons of every  
d, ampoules of cyanide hanging on leather  
ngs around their necks—gathered close to  
side, as if posing for a group photo, as if  
e proximity to him bestowed status. And  
ause they were only boys, and because they  
been living in the bush, the Tigers could  
hide their excitement at our presence; they  
ispered animatedly to one another, smiled  
ly in our direction. But not their leader. Ku-  
rappa stared without expression, his eyes un-  
nking, as if we were not really there at all.

The Sri Lankan army was closing in on Ku-  
rappa's group. In the last few days, they had  
ached a series of lightning assaults in the area,  
aing ever nearer to the base camp. Just that  
ming, helicopter gunships had swept in over  
lagoon and killed several people caught out  
the open. It was now only a matter of time—  
bably a very short time—before the army  
ved on the old farmhouse amid the rice pad-  
s, and if his boy followers hadn't figured that  
yet, it seemed that Kumarappa had; it was  
ng time, and Kumarappa was already there.

He motioned for us to follow him to the main  
t, a long dark room with reed walls and a  
atched roof. Four wicker chairs were arranged  
ound a low table, and upon this table a young  
ger placed three bottles of warm orange soda.  
Hunched in his chair, his weapon-laden  
ys gathered behind him, Kumarappa began  
talk of death, of the cyanide ampoules he  
d his Tigers would bite into when the final  
oment came.

"It's a good death. Yeah, it's a good death.  
ur soldiers do that. It's a very brave death...  
n not afraid to die, you know?"

He talked of spies, of the spies who were all  
ound him, in the villages, in the rice fields,  
en coming into the area from other places.  
ey were trained by British intelligence or

the Israeli Mossad, maybe even the CIA, and  
Kumarappa was always uncovering them, get-  
ting them to confess, tying them to lampposts  
and blowing off their heads as examples to oth-  
ers who would betray.

"Sometimes we put them on the lamppost,"  
he said, cradling his bottle of soda. "Sometimes,  
you know, we have the explosive wire—just  
around the body, and then we detonate it. This  
is our maximum punishment. We do it some-  
times. Two or three times we've done it."

And as he spoke, I felt Kumarappa was  
studying me. I don't  
know if this was true  
or merely my imagi-  
nation, but every  
time his empty, dead  
eyes turned in my di-  
rection, I became  
more certain that I  
was the subtext of his  
rambling conversa-  
tion, that in me Ku-  
marappa was deciding  
if he had found his latest spy.

Once this conviction took hold, it became  
paralyzing. Even as I tried to meet Kumarappa's  
stare—and it is impossible to stare for as long  
as a madman can—I knew that the fear was  
registering on my face, that I looked, in fact,  
very much like someone with a guilty secret. I  
felt caught in a deepening trap, fear giving way  
to a panic I wasn't sure I could suppress. At  
last, I simply dropped out of the conversation,  
let Jon Lee take over all the questioning, while  
I busily scribbled in my notepad, peered up at  
the thatched ceiling as if in deep concentra-  
tion, anything to avoid Kumarappa's gaze.

"We can show you one spy that we have  
caught," I heard Kumarappa say after a time.  
"Would you like to see a spy?"

It was impossible to not look at him then,  
and when I did, I saw that he was watching me,  
the hint of an indulgent smile on his lips. It was  
the first time he had smiled, and it was the first  
time in my life I was sure I was about to die.

I don't know how long this belief lasted—at  
most a few seconds—but then I looked down  
the length of the hut, down the passage that  
had suddenly formed between the gathered  
Tigers, and at the far end I saw the silhouette of  
a woman in the light, a silhouette being led to-  
ward us. That is when the belief left me, when I  
saw I was to live, and this filled me with such  
relief and gratitude that I felt transported, as if  
on this broken-down farm in the marshlands a  
hideous miracle had just occurred.

She was a few feet across from me, in the empty  
space of the hut beside Kumarappa. Her name was  
Ammamma. She was thirty-six years old, the wife

HE SMILED AT  
ME, AND THEN  
I WAS SURE I WAS  
ABOUT TO DIE



of a peasant farmer, the mother of seven children. Among the many events that had, no doubt, filled her short life, only the following were now important:

The Sri Lankan army had taken her husband and tortured him until he was a cripple. They had taken her two youngest children and given them to the sister of a Sergeant Dissayanake. And then the army had told Athuma that she could change the situation, that everything would work out, that there would be money for food and the children would be returned if only she gave Sergeant Dissayanake information about Kumarappa and his boy soldiers in the bush. And so, apparently, Athuma had.

But Athuma had not been a good spy—people who are coerced into it rarely are—and very quickly, before she was able to report anything of importance, the Tigers had found her and brought her to Kumarappa. That was two days ago. After two days of torture—revealed in the swelling on her face, her shuffling, lopsided gait as she walked toward us—Athuma had confessed to everything. There was now just a little more torturing to be done, and then it would be over.

"She knows very well the final decision," Kumarappa said. "She knows we are going to kill her."

And then Athuma began to beg for her life. It began as a soft whisper but gradually rose to a high-pitched chant, a disjointed blend of Tamil and English, and this pleading was not directed at Kumarappa but at us.

"Save me, save me, save me."

It continued for a long time, became a keen on the edge of hysteria. Kumarappa turned in his chair to watch Athuma, appeared both bored and amused as she leaned over the table, looking desperately between Jon Lee and me.

"Save me, save me."

And we tried. Slowly, gingerly, we felt around for some hidden corner in Kumarappa's heart. We went over the circumstances that had led Athuma into being a spy, the fact that she had not told the army anything damaging. We asked what would happen to her children, both the stolen ones and those here with their invalid father, if she were to die.

But Kumarappa, his hands folded over his little potbelly, remained unmoved by any of this. Instead, a suspicious light came into his eyes, and this time there was no ambiguity, no mistaking what it meant; he was asking himself why these two foreign men were trying to rescue this spy.

As if Kumarappa's paranoia were infectious, the mood throughout the room changed. The Tigers who were gathered behind him—friendly, unsophisticated boys a moment before—

turned suddenly sullen and dark, their faces hard against us.

"Save me, save me."

Athuma leaned out from her chair toward me, compelled me to look directly into her eyes—hers were dark brown with flecks of grey—low—and I remember opening my mouth one more time, but even while looking into her eyes, I felt the stare of Kumarappa and his killers, and I couldn't speak. I turned to Jon Lee and in the gaze that passed between us was an agreement, an understanding that it was over, that we had tried and could not try anymore.

Athuma understood as well. As quietly as she had begun, her plea ended, and I will always remember the sound of her sitting back in the chair, the creak of the wicker, for it was that moment when all hope left her. I could bring myself to look in her direction only one more time. She was staring down at the table, her matted hair framing her bruised face, and she no longer seemed frightened, only sad and terribly tired. A few minutes later, they took her away, and she again became what she had been at first: a silhouette, limping and hobbled, her time receding, passing out into the light of day.

I was in New Delhi, eleven days later, when I learned of the assault on the farmhouse. The Sri Lankan army had come in on gunships at dawn and circled the area, then methodically worked their way through to the grove of trees, killing everyone they found. The Sri Lankan government was claiming 23 dead Tigers, including Kumarappa, while local residents were claiming nearly 200 dead, mostly civilians; the truth was probably somewhere in between. Indian television ran a video of the aftermath and there was a slow pan of a dozen torn bodies in a row beside the ruins of the main hut. I looked for Kumarappa among the corpses but couldn't find him, only a couple of the boys I had talked to.

Jon Lee had flown on to Europe for a reunion with his wife, and in a week I was to join him in London before we moved on to the next war zone. I had told him I was going to stay in New Delhi for a few days to relax, maybe go down to Agra to see the Taj Mahal—but what I really wanted was to be alone. I didn't know how the incident with Athuma had affected him—we had barely discussed it before parting—but I believed that he was less bothered by it than I was; my brother was older, tougher, more experienced at war; he surely knew how to handle such things.

For me, it had brought a sense of shame deeper than I had ever thought possible. On an intellectual level, I understood I was not responsible for what I had felt in the hut—for either the fear or the relief—but no matter how many times I replayed that afternoon in my



nd, told myself it was irrational, I could not rid of the belief that Athuma and I had somehow traded places, that I hadn't really let all I could have to save her because if she lived I would not have.

My first two days in New Delhi I didn't leave my hotel room. I ordered food and beer from room service and had it left outside the door, and the maids there was nothing for them to do or straighten. I watched television, smoked cigarettes, paced, stared out the window at the people passing in the street. I relived being in the refugee camp and conjured up different scenarios, different endings. I played back the tape of that afternoon, listened to all the places where I could have said something but didn't. Then on the third day came news of the attack on the farmhouse, and I felt better. Now I could distract myself by envisioning how the Tigers died.

I knew Kumarappa hadn't eaten his cyanide; in war, the glory of martyrdom is reserved for children and rubes, those who don't know any better. I envisioned him trying to take a break for it, leaving his boys behind to die, trudging through the rice paddies with his pistol, perhaps getting far enough away to start believing he had made it, that he was safe, before being cut down, and I hoped that his end had not been quick, that Kumarappa had died for a while.

I thought of one boy in particular, Shankar, sweet-faced twelve-year-old with a beautiful smile and a Chinese sniper rifle, a boy so small he had sat on the lap of another Tiger when we interviewed him. I knew Shankar hadn't eaten his cyanide either. I envisioned him panicked as the soldiers closed on the farmhouse, lying wounded in the grass when the shooting stopped. I envisioned him crying for his mother and for mercy as a soldier approached, and I hoped the soldier had not been swayed, that he had put his gun to Shankar's head and pulled the trigger. What an awful thing, to hope for someone's death, for quick murder, but it was these hopes, this hate, that enabled me to finally leave the hotel room and rejoin the life I had watched from my window.

It seemed that the world had changed in my brief absence; of course, it was I who had. Beginning the day I left the New Delhi hotel and continuing over the subsequent years, there was about me a new manner, a kind of taut alertness. At one time, my pride had not allowed me to walk away from a fight. After Sri Lanka, I never showed anger, defused tense sit-

uations with an almost obsequious politeness. At one time, I had enjoyed going into the woods with a .22 rifle and shooting at birds and squirrels. Now I didn't want to kill anything, and even the feel of a gun in my hand was repellent. For a long time, I didn't want to go back to a war zone. When I finally did, it was only to "safe" battlefields—Belfast, Gaza—places where I was unlikely to look into the face of another Athuma.

There were other changes as well, a quirky, eclectic array. I discovered that I now had to live on the top floor of buildings, with large windows to view my surroundings. I was not comfortable in crowds or dark places. I no longer dreamed when I slept. I overreacted to sharp sounds. I felt nervous when helicopters flew overhead.

I understood that the incident with Athuma was not the cause of these changes but rather the culmination, the last link in all that had come before. I had been traveling a path ever since Beirut—perhaps ever since I first heard Chiang Kai-Shek's rantings in the central square of Taipei—and at the old farmhouse in Sri Lanka the path had finally given way beneath me. I understood that it had always been only a

matter of time before I met an Athuma.

What did not change was my reticence to talk about these things, about Athuma or anything else that had happened. Instead, I felt a keen desire to *not* do so, to partition off those memories as something that had no relevance to my new life. For some time, I seldom told new acquaintances I had written books, even more seldom the subject matter. To old friends who were curious about my apparent drift—why I wasn't working on another book, why I had moved to a seedy apartment in Baltimore, where I knew no one, or, later, why I spent two years doing clerical temp work in Boston—I offered the blandest of explanations, if any at all. Only to those closest to me could I talk about the farmhouse—and this only after four or five years had passed, only after I had extracted from them a promise of absolute secrecy. What also did not change were the returnings to that day, the sudden, always unexpected moments when I found myself back in the hut, Athuma coming toward me.

It was not until a number of years after Sri Lanka that I realized there was another force guiding my current approach to the world. It was another thing I did not know that I had briefly glimpsed on the New Delhi hotel and imagined

## THERE WAS JUST A LITTLE MORE TORTURING TO BE DONE



to be temporary. Along with whatever other emotion had taken root—sadness, shame—now there was also rage, a well of directionless hate. If I had become a gentler person, it was at least in part because I was fearful of the alternative. I didn't get angry, I didn't fight, because I didn't trust what I would do. I wouldn't get near a gun because I was afraid I might use it. And in seeing this, the odd little set of neuroses I had developed did not seem so eclectic after all; guarding against the rage meant being

vigilant and quiet, always in control, forever watching the horizon for signs of danger.

I found safe, discrete targets for my anger. Chief among them were those who advocated war or professed to understand

it. In London, I watched leftist students, in sandals and patchouli, demonstrate in support of the Tamil Tigers. In the buildup to Operation Desert Storm, I watched Young Republicans at the University of Iowa conduct a mock trial and execution of Saddam Hussein, listened to them cheer and whoop when "Hussein" was made to kneel on the stage to be "shot" in the head. I listened to pundits and academics opine about why a war was or wasn't a religious conflict, an economic or constitutional one. I did not need to confront leftists, rightists, college professors, or yahoos holding forth in a bar; it was enough to loathe them in silence, and I nurtured this loathing as if it were something precious.

It was in the autumn of 1994, nearly eight years after Sri Lanka, that my brother and I talked about Athuma for the first time. We were sitting on the porch of our sister's home in Connecticut late at night. A week earlier, our mother, who lived in Spain, had arrived to visit me and my sister—the only two of her five children who lived in the continental United States. She had fallen ill suddenly, too suddenly for my brother, living in Latin America, or my two other sisters in Hawaii to reach Connecticut before she died. Now, the day after our mother's death, Jon Lee wanted to be told everything that had happened, the precise chronology of events in her rapid decline. Her passing had been a painful one, difficult to witness, but for several hours on our sister's porch I calmly, numbly, told Jon Lee all he wanted to know.

"I don't know why we couldn't save her," I kept saying. "It happened so fast, but I don't

know why we couldn't save her."

After a time, though, my numbness wore off, replaced with the naked grief that tends to ebb and flow on such occasions, and amid this sorrow expanded to encompass the one woman we hadn't been able to save, Athuma.

"Did we really do everything we could do, we really?"

"Yes, we did," Jon Lee insisted. "We did everything we could, and it wasn't enough. We tried, and we couldn't try anymore." He said the right words, but in his eyes I saw that Jon Lee didn't believe them either, that he had remained haunted over the years as well.

And despite what is said, it is not always easier to grieve together. Sometimes it is easier to imagine yourself alone, to believe that other people—stronger, tougher than yourself—have figured it out and laid a trail that you might follow. Seeing the sorrows of my brother—the one for our mother, the old one for Athuma—was not an easy thing. Along with tenderness, I also felt an anxious despondency: no one was strong or tough enough to emerge unscathed; there was no trail out.

A few months later, I decided I would return to Sri Lanka. I got the idea from watching television programs about American veterans who were returning to their old battlefields, to Cambodia, to Vietnam. I watched these programs closely, studied the faces of the veterans—especially those who, earlier in the programs in their pre-journey interviews, had let their masks slip, had lost their composure in a moment of bad remembrance—because I wanted to see whether they finally found some measure of reconciliation, of peace, in the happy presence of the children in villages they had once fought over. The results seemed mixed at best, but the journeys also appeared to be the only thing these old soldiers could do, and I decided to copy them: I would go to Sri Lanka and find Athuma's children, those who were still alive. I would tell them what had happened, how I had tried. I would apologize.

Instead, someone called to ask if I would go to Chechnya, to follow the trail of a middle-aged American man and his three companions who had disappeared there, and a different image came to mind: this man and his companions somewhere in the Caucasus mountains, captive, despairing, but alive, waiting for death or someone to save them.

And so, perhaps having not truly learned anything yet, I went to Chechnya.

When a person believes he is about to die at the hands of another, he does not look at all the way one might expect. He does not scream or cry.

## A PERSON WHO IS ABOUT TO DIE BECOMES QUIET AND LETHARGIC



er, he becomes very quiet and lethargic, his eyes fill with a kind of shattered sadness as if all he wants to do is sleep. It is only this with a certain kind of dying, I imagine the kind where you have been given time to see what is coming, where you have tried to deliberate and reason and have failed.

In the front room of the farmhouse in the village, I see signs of this exhaustion in all my companions: Alex hunched forward on the floor, gazing miserably at the bare concrete wall; Aslan leaning against the wall, his arms crossed about his middle, staring down at his feet; Stanley's eyes fixed on the far white wall, distant and puzzled; even Ryan seems drained, his habitual grin gone, his eyelids heavy. I am reminded of looking into the face of a man that last time.

He stood at the edge of the broken-down couch and leaned onto his knees, and in the long silence that ensued he seemed lost in thought, methodically massaging his fingers, staring down at the floor. At last, he sighed and looked up at me.

"You are not supposed to be here. No one is allowed here. How do I know you're not spies?"

The note from the liaison was gone. I had given it to one of the rebels who first stopped us, the one who seemed most senior, and he now made a great show of looking for it, rummaging through the various pockets of his fatigues and turning up nothing.

"I must have given it back to you," he said to me. "You must have it."

He was lying, but I didn't know to what end. Was he protecting us or doing the opposite? It was impossible to know, and there was no time



CHIECHINYA,  
1995

We had been stopped as soon as we reached the outskirts of the village, hustled out of the village and led into the stone farmhouse that was the rebel's command post. They were eager to see us—the village was closed to civilians, the track in "restricted"—but at first we were treated more with curiosity than with suspicion; we drank tea and shared cigarettes, the rebels talked animatedly about the war and why they were fighting. It was when the commander arrived that everything changed.

He was in his forties, wearing a black leather jacket and strange, ankle-high boots. He shook the back of our hands without smiling, then sat on

to ponder or watch for clues.

In the absence of the note, the commander began his slow, calm interrogation of us. He asked why we had come, who had sent us, and studied our identity papers as if they were weighty evidence. To his questions we gave the most innocent of answers—that Alex had come to deliver relief supplies, that I had come to chronicle the mission—but nothing swayed the commander. Instead, it seemed that everything we said, every insistence of our simple intentions, served only to convict us more, lead us that much closer to a bad end. Everyone in the room knew what was happening—the



rebel who a short time before had seemed to me and everyone else now looked away, refused to make eye contact—and it was the interminable leanness of our descent, our stumbling inability to find ally or the world that might accept, that finally led us into a crushing apathy, to that place where our strength remains, where it simply for the present, to end.

And then I find the word—that cut through. Or maybe it is not word at all but the way I look and feel, humbly, guiltlessly, into the commander's eye. Or maybe it isn't any of this but only a capricious shift in the executioner's heart—and suddenly we find the interrogation is over and we are free. Still dazed by the speed and my tory of our deliverance, we are led to the ambulance, and the rebels gather around to shake our hands, to slap us on the back, to wish us a safe journey, as if we are close friends they are sad to see leave.

While driving back through the mountains, I remember the man I had gone to the village to find. I never asked the rebel about him, and for the first time I grasp the colossal scale of my hubris. What had I expected? That I would stumble upon the American and his companions standing at the roadside? That I could go to the village, meet the men who had almost certainly murdered the lost group, and have them confide in me? What had I been thinking?

During the slow quiet drive away from the village, I am reminded again of what it is about war that has always tormented me, that I have never been able to reconcile. Although it has been proved in front of my eyes a dozen times, I have never truly accepted that what separates the living from the dead is largely a matter of coincidence, of good luck or bad, that in war men and women and children die simply because they do, and that there is no plan or reason to any of it. If a faith has guided me, it has been one of arrogance, the belief that I have power, that I can save, that violence will come through.

Athuma was dead before I saw her, she was dead sitting across from me, and she was dead when I left. There was nothing I could have done to make it turn out differently. There was nothing I could have done to save the American man in the village, and there was nothing I could have done to save myself or my companions—no note, no tillman, no word. But the impotence is almost too much to bear. It is either somehow to endure the self-torture of rage, of shame, of hope—that come with the belief that there is a pattern, that we can hope it.

Perhaps this is because of the greater powerlessness that lies beyond, the inability to ever go back. Returning to Sri Lanka and seeing Athuma's children would not have changed anything. Finding the American man in the

village would not have canceled out Athuma the farmhouse. If the goal is to reconcile, to see what has happened, the self-torture will never end; grace can come only in knowing that the wounds never heal, that they have become a part of you and are to be carried. They can't be done, that you must stop trying.

About an hour after leaving the village while turning a hillside, we come to a Toyota Land Cruiser stuck in mud up to the floorboards, its three occupants sitting dejectedly in the grass. It is the only other vehicle we have seen all day, and, following the etiquette of the mountains, Aslan stops the ambulance and starts to fashion a towline from a coil of rope. The rest of us step out to stretch our legs. By coincidence, we have stopped above the same small glade where Alex pointed out the unusual sprawl of stones that morning and for several minutes, the four of us stand silently on the edge of the bluff, staring down the hillside at them.

I look to the far side of the road and notice that we are directly below the crest of a flat-topped mountain, a mesa. Most of the slope is dirt, but at the crest is a uniform, six-foot sea of rock, and I see that the square boulders of the pasture below are not old ruins but simple sections of the escarpment that have fallen away. I turn to point this out to my companions, but it is too late; Alex has begun running toward the rocks. I watch him go—an awkward girlish run, his scarf snapping in the breeze—and I am seized with a dread that, at first, I cannot identify. I clamber down into the mud to where Aslan is busy with the towline.

"Is there a tunnel?"

Aslan looks up and seems to sniff the air, as if I've asked him if it might rain. He shrugs.

I climb back to the edge of the bluff and see that Alex has reached his destination. He is standing atop one of the immense stones, his hands on his hips, and although he surely knows now that his ancient ruins are only fallen boulders, he seems quite pleased with himself, a preening explorer.

I shout down to Alex, tell him to be careful that there might be mines. Even across the long expanse of pasture, I can see the tension come into his body, and I know the weight that has dropped into his chest, the ringing emptiness that has replaced his thoughts. I watch him gingerly pick his way back up the hill, his shoulders stooped like an old man. I try to remember the way he was just moments ago—happily running through the meadow, his feet planted upon his rock—and I am held by the sadness of how he has changed, of how we all change out here.



# DREAMING OF A BLACK CHRISTMAS

Kwanzaa bestows the gifts of therapy  
By Gerald Early

For the past five or six years, in my position as head of the African-American studies program at the university where I teach, I've been invited by the black students on campus to take part in their annual celebration of Kwanzaa, the African-American holiday that is gaining in popularity each year. The festivities, which are usually celebrated during the seven days between December 26 and January 1, are compressed, for the students' purposes, into one evening. The ceremony takes place in one of the campus's cafeterias. All the trappings of a somber religious occasion are there: candles, a mat, a ritual cup, remarks to the gathered celebrants.

Because Kwanzaa is designed to connect African Americans to their African heritage, the colors and symbols of that continent predominate. Kente cloth is ubiquitous, as are the red, black, and green of Marcus Garvey's Pan-African flag. Gifts of nuts, fruits, and vegetables, which are meant to recall African harvest festivals, are placed on the mat. Corn, a symbol of children, is also offered, to remind us that we are responsible to the youngest of the community.

The gathering can take on the solemnity of a church service. A Unity Cup—passed around among the celebrants—serves as a kind of Eucharist of Africanity. Much ado is made of the family, particularly the elders. A roll call of black heroes is intoned. Naturally, as at any serious black gathering, we sing the black national anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," which is just as unsingable as the "white" national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." Yet it often feels good to sing it in a roomful of blacks, as if it were a spiritual of how we have endured in a strange land.

*Gerald Early is the Merle Kling Professor of Modern Letters at Washington University in St. Louis and the director of the school's African and Afro-American Studies Program.*



THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND  
KWANZAA ARE LESS IDEAS THAN  
SLOGANS, AND THAT IS THEIR  
VIRTUE: THEY ARE SIMPLISTIC,  
BANAL, AND VAGUE



The celebrants then go on to offer meditations on the meaning of the holiday, but I slip out just as soon as I can. I'm a middle-aged man, and don't like hanging around with groups of twenty-year-olds any longer than I have to. It's more than just the socializing, though. I always feel a little uneasy at Kwanzaa gatherings. The holiday, with its tenuous historical roots, its mimicry of so-called ancient festivals, its celebration of vague "sacred" principles, is one that has never moved me. There is something so contrived, so *invented* about it, so pointed in its moral purpose, that I can't help wishing for a holiday with a bit more universality—something like Christmas, the holiday Kwanzaa intends to preempt.

**K**wanzaa, which is celebrated, according to its boosters, by an estimated 18 million African Americans, was indeed invented, and not so very long ago. Although it purports to evoke early African culture, Kwanzaa is child not of Stone Age Africa but of the American civil-rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s. The holiday's inventor, Maulana Karenga, is now a professor of black studies at California State University at Long Beach. In 1965, as Ron Karenga, he was the leader of a Los Angeles-based black organization called US. After earning degrees in political science from UCLA, Karenga got involved in local civil-rights battles, and became a prime mover and shaker in the rebuilding of Watts after the riots there.

In the Sixties, Karenga developed a black value system that he called Kawaida—a Swahili word meaning "tradition" or "reason"—offering an "African" cultural alternative to what he felt was imperialist Eurocentrism. The doctrinal bedrock of Kawaida was the seven principles that Karenga created, which he termed the Nguzo Saba. According to Karenga, these were the core principles "by which Black people must live in order to begin to rescue and reconstruct our history and lives." They are:

1. Umoja (Unity)
2. Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)
3. Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)
4. Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)
5. Nia (Purpose)
6. Kuumba (Creativity)
7. Imani (Faith)

Kawaida turned out to be little more than these seven principles. It would certainly be a fanciful turn of mind to call it a philosophical system or a fully developed theology. It is systematic only because it is numbered, resembling, in this way, both the Ten Commandments and the bylaws of a fraternal organization, with a vague hint of some form of numerology.

The principles that became the foundation of Kwanzaa are also, as before, an American creation, a pastiche: there's a good deal of the African political philosopher Julius Nyerere, some of former Senegalese president Leopold Senghor's "Negritude," a bit of Mao, a dash of Marx, a serving of Garveyite Pan-Africanism, and a pinch of nature religion.

Had the seven principles remained tied only to Kawaida, they probably would have been forgotten. But as the set of beliefs governing Kwanzaa—each of the seven days is tied to one of the principles—they may survive. For what they lack as a serious philosophical system is precisely what gives them populist appeal. They are less ideas than a set of slogans, and that is their virtue: they are simplistic, banal, and vague. ("Every day of the year we must apply and practice the Nguzo Saba sincerely and faithfully to have vest success," *The Complete Kwanzaa*, by Dorothy Winbush Riley, advises. "If you wanted to sing like Whitney Houston, would you think of your music only once a week? . . . If you wanted to be a champion athlete like Michael Jordan, would you abuse your body, neglect your meals, and skip routine practice?") They combine the beatitude of willpower, an African-American preoccupation, with the righteousness of racial uplift, an African-American preoccupation.



THE FOUNDER OF  
KWANZAA SOUGHT TO  
REHABILITATE CHRISTMAS  
WITH A VIVID RE-CREATION  
OF SOMETHING AFRICAN

Racial piety also permeates the Kwanzaa principles. Such simple maxims are the sort of earnest ideals that are difficult to oppose or argue with. One questions whether they really have any connection to the complexity of modern African-American life. The genius of Kwanzaa—the reason it has taken on the air of a mass movement—is that these rather

innocuous principles are joined with an historical complaint, one that blacks have long harbored, against the cultural celebration of Christmas.

Frequently enough in my boyhood during the 1950s and '60s, some black person, during the holiday season, would complain about the whiteness of Christmas, that Christmas, if not an inherently racist idea, had become an added oppressive weight in the lives of African Americans. Irving Berlin's "White Christmas" was regarded in some quarters with a kind of measured irony; here was a song not about weather but about culture. People would say, "That line 'And may all your Christmases be white' is the white man's hope for the future."

It was customary to hear the opinion, usually voiced only at Christmas, that black parents should not buy white dolls for their daughters. And in the barbershops and on the street corners I heard lectures about the economic and political insanity of supporting white businesses during the holiday, how unsavory it was to give our money to white merchants who do nothing for our communities. If we were going to buy things we did not need at Christmas, so the argument went, wasting our money in a wild orgy of consumerism, then we ought to at least buy black; that is, buy products made by black-owned companies at stores run by black merchants.

But the black complaint that as a boy I heard, writ large, about Christmas mixed several elements together indiscriminately. Not everyone made the same charge against the holiday; no single unified view of what Christmas meant or failed to mean to black folk presented itself. Was Christmas bad because of the white images, because of the consumerism, because of the scarcity of black businesses? It was not clear.

For the most insistently race-conscious, there was the political dilemma, wrapped in spiritual guise, of praying to a white baby Jesus with a white Joseph and Mary looking on. The crèche at my all-black church had a blond baby Jesus. This did not seem odd to me or, I'm sure, to most members in my congregation until after 1964, when Black Power and black nationalism became strong movements within the black community.

It was then that I first heard talk of celebrating a black Christmas.

For those who bought into the most race-conscious cultural critique, the celebration of Christmas was not unlike the kind of political conspiracy that Frederick Douglass described as the slave's Christmas on the southern plantation in his 1845 *Narrative*:

The days between Christmas and New Year's day are allowed as holidays; and, accordingly, we were not required to perform any labor, more than to feed and take care of the stock. . . . A slave who would work during the holidays was considered by our masters as scarcely deserving them. He was regarded as one who rejected the favor of his master. It was deemed a disgrace not to get drunk at Christmas; and he was regarded as lazy indeed, who had not provided himself with the necessary means, during the year, to get whisky enough to last him through Christmas.

From what I know of the effect of these holidays upon the slave, I believe them to be among the most effective means in the hands of the slaveholder in keeping down the spirit of insurrection.

It is, of course, immediately noticeable that Kwanzaa is celebrated virtually over the same course of time as the original slave holiday of Christmas. This suggests that Karenga sought to rehabilitate the Christmas festival with a vivid re-creation of something African or allegedly African, some kind of generative response to the way the holiday had been used to debase the de-



KWANZAA PRESENTS A  
ROMANTICIZED AFRICA  
FOR THE BLACK AMERICAN,  
AND, AS SUCH, IT SERVES A  
SPECIFICALLY AMERICAN NEED

enimated, culturally deprived African slave. Karenga goes out of his way to say that Kwanzaa is "not a Black Christmas." But even in emphasizing its opposition to Christmas, he confirms that the two are linked. In his primer, *Kwanzaa: Origins, Concepts, Practice*, Karenga explains how he designed the holiday to "give a Black alternative to the existing holiday and give Black an opportunity to celebrate themselves."

Indeed, Kwanzaa's success depends on exacerbating, consciously or unconsciously, black people's sense of alienation from Christmas. With a fat white man who delivers toys and gifts to children, Christmas simply confirms many African Americans' perception that everything in American society reinforces the idea of white supremacy. In this respect, Kwanzaa becomes, as the Afrocentrist writer Haki Madhubuti asserts, an "Afro-American celebration [that] is truly progressive and revolutionary."

Kwanzaa's partisans may stress that their holiday is not religious (though for some the holiday answers the kinds of questions about origin and destiny that are normally the domain of religion) and that its practice does not interfere with any religious tradition: black people, they say, can celebrate Christmas too. Yet these partisans know that Kwanzaa's power lies in its cultural statement, its refutation of the whiteness of Christmas.

W

ith its replication of a harvest holiday or festival, Kwanzaa provides African Americans with a kind of elegiac pastoralism, a sense of ancient Africa as a paradise lost, a romanticism of agrarian life that only urban people who have never farmed for a living could hold with a straight face. But as Kwanzaa works to regenerate a romanticized Africa for the black American, it serves a specifically American need. This need is related to a particular psychological state of the American black as an African manqué and an American manqué.

That the identity of African Americans is marked by such alienation should come as a surprise to no one. Again, Frederick Douglass articulated this alienation as famously as any black when he delivered his famous July 5, 1852, speech entitled "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" in which he stated:

I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity, and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine.

What Douglass was rejecting was what could be called the American civic religion, a set of traditions and myths manufactured by white America to elevate its own culture and history. This religion—inculcated in public-school civics classes, dime-store novels, government proclamations, televised holiday spectacles, and every conceivable cultural outlet—had its own vaunted values (freedom, individual responsibility: "pulling yourself up by your bootstraps"), its myths (George Washington's cherry tree, Horatio Alger, Manifest Destiny), its hymns, and, of course, its holidays (Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July).

For more than a century, African Americans have responded to the civic religion, which for the most part excludes them, by attempting to create a civic religion of their own. The process began with the various "Juneteenth" celebrations marking the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation or the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, the black person's equivalent of the Fourth of July. As a black born and raised in the North, not only never celebrated Juneteenth Day, I had never heard of it until I was informed in barbershops by black southern immigrants, some of whom



ill continued to celebrate it in the North. These black freedom festivals were celebrated haphazardly in the South on various dates from May to September, largely depending on when the state's slaves heard the news that they were free. (Blacks in Texas reportedly heard the news on June 9, 1865; many still celebrate Juneteenth on that day.)

The first concerted effort by blacks to create a unified civic occasion on the calendar was the launching of Negro History Week by black historian Carter G. Woodson in 1926. By 1976 the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Woodson's creation, declared a Black History Month, in February, which is now a permanent cultural fixture. In 1986, Congress made Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, January 15, a national holiday, largely through the agitation of black Americans. With the widespread celebration of Kwanzaa, it can be said that from the end of December to the end of February, blacks—their cultural and political concerns, their history, the significance of their presence in the American landscape—dominate the American civic calendar. No other American ethnic group draws or compels such sustained attention, which alone is a stunning achievement, though a mixed blessing.

What blacks are trying to do is forge a usable black past, an entirely reasonable and worthy goal. But the creation of this past has in recent years become an all-consuming preoccupation. Blacks are seeking to create an entire set of institutions and celebratory occasions that will rival, and parallel, white (or American) civic piety. This parallelism is an expression of both pride and psychological insecurity, of strength and guilt, of ego and resentment. The marginalized demonstrate their power by inventing institutions and occasions that celebrate their marginality as morally superior, a form of nobility. These inventions express a paradox: the desire to assimilate and the desire never to be assimilated.

Nothing brings together the elements of black civic piety better than Kwanzaa. Nothing better reveals the extraordinary ability of the marginalized both to liberate and entrap themselves at the same time. For in creating a cultural orthodoxy designed to combat racism, urban disorder, and a legacy of oppression, we subject ourselves to delusional dogma, the tyranny of conformity, and language that rings of fascist imagery. Talk of "soil," "ancestors," and "blood" does not retrieve our history but makes it impossible for us to truly discover it.

Kwanzaa is, in short, a holiday of compensation. Much of what blacks do to strengthen their ethnic identity is compensatory, which is why so much of what black people do "in their blackness" seems a form of therapy. Kwanzaa is therapy, too—a therapy that is related to being American or, rather, to being denied what blacks feel is their true status as Americans. Karenga, in his primer, insistently explained Kwanzaa's African-American origins: "The first myth is that Kwanzaa is a continental African holiday rather than an Afro-American one. But the fact is that there is nowhere on the African continent a holiday named Kwanzaa. . . . Kwanzaa is an Afro-American holiday which by its very definition reflects the dual character of the identity and experience of the Afro-American people."

In Kwanzaa, African Americans seek nothing less than redemption from their status as second-class Americans and incomplete Africans. It is the culmination of a century-long project to create a civic religion that will be able to contain their American and African selves. But the danger with this sort of therapy is that it trivializes the profundity of the very heritage it is attempting to make sacred. With Kwanzaa, the African American reduces the complexity of his ancestry to the salve of cure. All that we get, from millennia of history and profound cultural experience, is to feel good about ourselves.

**E**very holiday season, a man by the name of Charles "Babatu" Murphy who works in the African-American studies program at my

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OF THERAPY—THERAPY  
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AS AMERICANS





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IS A SIGN NOT OF THE  
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ECONOMIC POWER OF BLACKS



school gets swept up by Kwanzaa. He covers the door to his office with Kwanzaa signs. He talks to students about the holiday both at the university and in public schools in the area. In a word, he believes in it; he believes in its ideological necessity and social good, believes in it, indeed something better than religion, because, at least at this moment, it has no priests and no church. I find the sincerity of his belief both endearing and admirable (even though I make it a point that the program ignore the holiday, as it does all others).

Murphy is proud that the first Kwanzaa celebration held in St. Louis was held in his house. To him, "the main reason Kwanzaa caught on initially was because it was correct, and it fit the people." But he now finds himself worrying about the commercialization of the holiday.

"Kwanzaa is being co-opted," he says, "just like Christmas."

He's speaking of the seemingly infinite outlets in the marketplace now for all things Kwanzaa. There are cookbooks, children's stories, how-to manuals, factory-made mats, mass-produced Unity Cups, Taiwanese-made candleholders, Hallmark greeting cards, compact discs.

To many followers of the holiday, this commercial glut is particularly galling, since founder Karenga has always insisted that Kwanzaa be a non-commercial celebration. Gift giving is still a critical part of the celebration—on the seventh day children receive gifts that are supposed to illustrate the seven principles—but Karenga emphasizes that these gifts, as well as all decorations for the holiday, are to be homemade. When I spoke in St. Louis last Kwanzaa, he went to great lengths to warn his audience of the creeping danger of commercializing the holiday. In his primer, he explained that he designed the holiday, in part, to help black people save money: "I established the days for Kwanzaa as 26 December–1 January. It is on 26 December that after-Christmas sales begin, and thus it is economically sound to shop after the Christmas season rather than during the season."

In any case, Kwanzaa's commercialism is a sign not necessarily of the corruption of the holiday but of the increasing economic power of blacks. The fact is, there are far more black professional and middle-class people in the United States—that is, more black people with decent income and some clout—than ever before. The income of black Americans, particularly middle-class black Americans, has risen faster than that of whites (though it is still less than whites).

To be able to purchase such paraphernalia is an important sign of status for the black middle class. Indeed, such people would hardly be interested in the holiday if it remained a primitive practice, because it would lack the self-evident status of upward mobility they crave. And both the black middle class and the black working class are generally pleased to see Kwanzaa displays in bookstores and department stores, since these items are a sign that black tastes are being catered to, that blacks are being taken seriously as a market, that they have an economic presence that whites cannot afford to ignore. The old preoccupation with racial loyalty rears its head. But the fact that whites sell the stuff, recognize its moneymaking potential, should help black businesses in the long run by granting the holiday a place in the mainstream.

It seems clear to me that what most blacks wish, in seeing the holiday gain popularity, is not that Kwanzaa would be less commercial but that only blacks would control and benefit from it. But no market is reserved for an ethnicity by virtue of some moral view on the part of that ethnicity,

some kind of invisible cultural tariff. Nothing will consign Kwanzaa to a deserved death of provincial irrelevance quicker than that.

Part of my personal resistance to Kwanzaa lies in the fact that I am a Christian, and that I have always been deeply grateful to Jesus that He was able to reduce life to one principle, which makes it six principles



KWANZAA IS ABOUT BLACK  
DECLINE, THE NOTION THAT  
OUR GREATNESS LIES IN A  
MISTY PAST, BEFORE THE  
COMING OF THE WHITE MAN

hter than carting around Kwanzaa. Moreover, there are aspects of  
wanzaa, the way in which its founders felt the holiday could serve  
eds, that somehow signify the defeat of black people. Kwanzaa, like  
rocentrism, is about black decline, the notion that our greatness lies in  
misty past of purity, before the coming of the white man. The story of  
le black American, however, is one not only of indignities but of many  
credible triumphs in the face of those indignities, triumphs that Kwan-  
a, with its paltry, contrived symbols, seems scarcely capable of captur-  
g. Give me a good blues record by Bessie Smith or Muddy Waters, or  
ike Ellington and the boys doing "East St. Louis Toodle-oo," a bottle  
beer, and a checkerboard with one of my kids as an adversary, and  
ere's more meaning there than in all the Kwanzaas from here to eterni-  
Give me no more of this rescue mission for blackness. Spare me the  
scuers and their ideology.

I say this, and yet I know things are not quite so simple. Last year, I was  
vited to another Kwanzaa celebration. At some point after the (diffi-  
lt) round of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," I sat at one of the tables with  
graduate student of mine, waiting for an appropriate moment to leave.  
ne crowd was relatively large and slightly mixed: these are never exclu-  
ely black events; a few white students always show up. This is good to  
e, and it is good to know that both black and white students strive, even  
umsily, for a certain kind of outreach.

At one point I spotted a woman who reminded me of my oldest sister.  
er nickname came to me, Kissy, and I had not thought of that name in a  
ng time. I began to think of a Christmas long ago when I was a boy. It  
is a year when my mother gave my oldest sister a Monopoly game. She  
ught both me and my other sister, very patiently, how to play, and I re-  
ember a rainy December 26 when we sat, the three of us, beside the  
ristmas tree, playing Monopoly and eating oranges and Brazil nuts. My  
dest sister even let me win a game. She thought I didn't know and I  
ver let on, but I knew she let me win.

My sisters both had their white dolls sitting next to them, helping them  
ay the game. And they looked, for all the world, like the most beautiful  
ings God ever made, my sisters and their white dolls. My mother took  
ctures with color film. I remember it was the only time of year that my  
other used color film, because it was so expensive to develop. We were  
t a family given to taking pictures. We had just gotten our phone a  
ek before, and my mother talked with all our relatives. I was thrilled to  
e bone every time it rang.

That night we sat up late, with the Monopoly board still on the floor,  
d watched *What's My Line?* on TV and ate ice cream and cake under a  
gged quilt made by our great-aunt. It was one of the happiest times of  
y life.

I thought, at that moment, sitting at that Kwanzaa celebration, how I  
id not seen my oldest sister in a very long time and how I wished at that  
ry moment that I could see her and tell her how much I liked that time,  
ow good it was, how good Christmas was that year, because Christmases  
e not always good. But my oldest sister does not like to reminisce, or at  
ast she never does with me. How I wish I could have seen her then to  
ll her that I was thinking of her. I had that feeling of not quite being in  
ntrol of myself, as if I might cry, and I simply had to get out of there.

So I left the cafeteria, bidding adieu to my graduate student. But I  
ought, once I was outside and had gathered myself a bit, that perhaps  
wanzaa would give these kids, somehow, their own sense of shared  
emory. Not some magical blackness or Africanness. Not some set of rit-  
ls and symbols of a real or fabricated past. But just one undying memo-  
, some imperishable moment of uncontrived human connection. I was  
ankful that this Kwanzaa had, in whatever accidental way, evoked  
ch a memory for me. What else is Kwanzaa, Christmas, or any other  
oliday, in the end, good for? ■



# A FLAPPING OF SCOLDS

The literary establishment descends on T. S. Eliot

By Vince Passaro

Among the books discussed in this essay:

*T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form*, by Anthony Julius.

Cambridge University Press. 308 pages. \$18.95.

*Great Books: My Adventures with Homer, Rousseau, Woolf, and Other Indestructible Writers of the Western World*, by David Denby. Simon & Schuster. 493 pages. \$30.

*Heart of Darkness*, by Joseph Conrad. Broadview Press. 245 pages. \$7.95.

*Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909–1917*, by T. S. Eliot. Harcourt Brace. 472 pages. \$30.

Since we cannot attain to greatness, let us have our revenge by railing at it.

—Montaigne

A certain kind of landmark was reached when T. S. Eliot, *Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form* began to gain widespread attention after it was published in England and the United States in late 1995. Its author, Anthony Julius, is a literature Ph.D.-cum-London solicitor, and his duty, as he perceives it, is to prosecute Eliot's poetry for the crime of its author's anti-Semitism. The book contains several reassurances of Julius's utmost respect for Eliot as an artist, but his main business is to give Eliot's reputation a thorough thrashing. He begins by accusing Eliot of being an anti-Semite, which Eliot unquestionably was, and then takes this idea much further than previous critics of Eliot have, by arguing that anti-Semitism is central to Eliot's work, and that

Vince Passaro is a contributor to *Rolling Stone*. Harper's *Magazine*. His last piece, "Dreaded Fiction," appeared in the September 1996 issue.



since Eliot's work is both valid as poetry and richly anti-Semitic, his anti-Semitism should be seen as his most complex and significant aesthetic achievement. "Ignore the anti-Semitism," Julius declares, "and

the poetry itself disappears."

Thus is the poet rendered utterly vile. Julius's argument is close and relentless, is based on one full poem, five passages in Eliot's poetry (some of which were not published in his lifetime), and a few scattered prose remarks, including a notorious statement about the undesirability in a Christian society of "free-thinking Jews." Based on these slender pickings, one of the two greatest poets in English (the other is Yeats) since Blake, Keats, and Wordsworth is taken down. Yeats, like so many Modernists, a demi-fascist in his own right, no doubt is scheduled for execution soon.

Not until the early summer of 1996 did one begin to hear much about the book on this side of the Atlantic. The first report came in a vacuous article in *The New Yorker's* Town of the Town, which crowed about smart London dinner parties and Julius's cresting celebrity (he was Princess Diana's matrimonial attorney at the time) and congratulated him, with a jaunty approval usually bestowed on strong wrestler or winning ponies, for having "erec-



barriers across every route down which critics have attempted to struggle [Eliot's] good name." This bumbling was followed shortly thereafter by serious and approving reviews from Louis Menand in *The New York Review of Books* and Michiko Kakutani in the *New York Times*. Negative reviews, a rearing up of the old guard for the most part, would come later; at first one detected only the sighs of pleasure that fill the air during the public flogging of a runner. The literary community was expressing its charmed gratitude to the one who had done for it a dirty but necessary job.

The depth of this gratitude was brought home to me shortly after the first reviews appeared, at a party in the New York offices of an old and much respected literary agency. There I found myself discussing Julius's book with a woman from the publishing community whose name I did not catch. We agreed that Eliot is an anti-Semite, but the lady did not concur with my opinion that this is a relatively minor matter as far as poetry was concerned. She mentioned, as people often do, the poem "Jeremiad," which contains the lines "And the Jew squats on the windowsill, the owner, / Spawned in some garret of Antwerp." The prototypical reference to the Jew as landlubber, the nearly scatological squatting, and the animalistic "spawned" combine to give a truly loathsome aspect to the image. But unlike Eliot's other anti-Semitic lines, this one is marked by considerable secondary meanings (about which, more below) that contradict the most immediate one. I gave the lady a brief précis of my reasons for believing the line to be something more than it appeared to be, and her reaction was startling. To recall an image from Pete Hammill, her face twisted into a fist, and she said, "Well, all that's very nice."

Because it is exactly the aim of literature to be nice in the way this lady meant—that is, to provide complication, not particularly useful, and occasionally dangerous pleasure—I was justified by her terms of dismissal. And then it began to dawn on me that what her disgust really entailed, besides a painful reaction to the anti-

Semitism itself, was a conviction that literature had no right to cause that pain, using such unpleasantly effective images and words. Perhaps because I was educated at the tail end of a period when sophisticated responses to language and narrative were encouraged,<sup>1</sup> or perhaps because I am romantic, I cannot stop believing that there still lingers a willingness, even a proud willingness, among members of the higher realms of American literary culture to extend to serious art the privilege of causing pain, of exorcizing demons, of flirting with annihilation, of attempting to say the unsayable or give voice to what for prudence's and politeness's sake should be left unspoken.

Obviously, no such privilege exists, and not because of a prudish public but because of an academic and procedure-ridden literary world, which chooses not to "authorize" work that offends or threatens us in any way. Despite those in the culture wars on the right of the political spectrum who have complained that the left is responsible for this neutered state among critics and academics, the new prudery actually reflects a reactionary, nineteenth-century impulse, a deeply conservative desire to bring all cultural expression into harmony with the moral conventions of our day. It is as if we had woken one morning to discover that the majority of our critics had turned into parents who don't read, an irritating deterrent to our literary development. Literature's function now, according to this group, is to affirm the predominant cultural values of our time, and the agreement that this is its proper role seems as unshakable as the ancient prohibitions aimed at the protection

of virginity, or the contemporary ban on smoking in public places.

To take the larger view of Julius's success, it is helpful to remember that we are currently in the midst of one of the flush moments in a lingering Western orthodoxy that defines art, first and foremost, as the handmaiden of virtue. The new moralism is not, as many would have it, merely a matter of political correctness versus traditional canons; it is a projection of a long-standing and deeply middle-class fear and resentment of art, one that has frequently dominated the American scene and that can be found in equal measure among leftist cultural critics and conservative opponents of whatever is politically or sexually offensive. The Western literary intellectual in the late twentieth century has been, compared with his or her brethren of a century or even a half-century ago, severely undereducated and raised in an atmosphere full of irrational babble, grave pieties, and adamant distinctions. We seem to have bred a generation of literary critics who know how to speak only in the tones of those who deplore, who regret, who feel compelled to express their outrage at one or another form of doctrinal deviation. Standing against them are almost no advocates of a literature that dares to speak unpleasantly or even plainly about the darker corners of the heart. Today's professional critics and literary academics are rarely lucid, they are even more rarely funny, and in the recent past I cannot think of one who has made his or her reputation by promoting and helping to develop a particular creative style or group of writers.

We live in a time, too, when "art," for its economic survival, must be peddled as a public good akin to universal health care, with a body of administrators paid to make sure every population is represented and gets its weekly dose. The patrons of art in our time are figures with access to government and corporate purchase-order numbers, and it is a matter of political survival for them to claim that we are all being personally and

<sup>1</sup> The heroes of the English department as late as the middle 1970s were figures such as Eliot, Conrad, Pound, Joyce, Ford, and Henry James. Critics such as F. R. Leavis, I. A. Richards, and Lionel Trilling dominated undergraduate thinking. On our own we read William Burroughs, Nathanael West, Flannery O'Connor, Ralph Ellison, Thomas Pynchon, Walker Percy, Don DeLillo, writers whose visions were the most angular, whose light was most severe. In class, the Brontës and George Eliot were considered more daring and therefore more interesting than Jane Austen, and no one discussed Trollope at all.



socially improved by art. What we are not being, they are quick to assure us in moments of wrenching doubt, is challenged or disturbed.

Until recently the growing orthodoxy of virtue in literature was, for me, only so much cultural noise, a Charlie Rose interview with Bill Bennett, so to speak, something easily tuned out and forgotten after a moment's glance. But over the last year or so I have encountered the scene too many times not to notice the depth of our era's skepticism about great writers and their central intentions. I have been led to the sobering realization, probably long overdue, that the enemy being battled here, the thing being so vigorously "resisted," to use a crucial word Anthony Julius employs to describe his mission as a critic of Eliot, is not just morally unacceptable thoughts, or the canon of dead white Europeans, but literature itself.

What we despise about literature, and what exhausts us about modern literature in particular, is its irony, its acknowledgment that in most cases the beautiful process of creation is tinged with something slightly immoral, something exploitative of intimacies and experience, rude, vain, self-justifying, disloyal, brutal, unrestrained. Edward Said's work—in *Orientalism*, *Culture and Imperialism*, and elsewhere—demonstrates how the canonical art of the West in modern times has been both an expression of and an appeal to the language, assumptions, and favored mythologies of the high merchant classes. We can accept this while still retaining a conviction that artists, being artists, want to take a blade to the language, the manners and codes and pet conventions of their class, and slice them up and thrust the bloody remains in our faces. Modern art insists on making something significant and even beautiful out of ugliness, dissonance, fever, hatred, anger, failure, and pain. Readers, viewers, and audiences, following intuitions of their own, often allow this, but marketeers and critics usually do not.

The tragic impulse in literature is what such impresarios of art wish to

demolish most of all, especially complicated or ambiguous tragedy. If one must portray tragedy, it should be simple and psychologically direct, something akin to *Death of a Salesman* or Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*. The cultural apparatchiks are particularly weary with literature's resistance to ideas, its tendency to play with them, to put itself above them, to poke holes in them. The best literature does this in the most infuriatingly complicated ways, making itself difficult to pin down and analyze, which explains why in our time it is the best writers who have to be made into criminals.<sup>2</sup>

Then again, even minor writers with big names are not exempt: Norman Rush recently implied in *The New York Times Book Review* that John le Carré's name should be added to the list of those with suspect attitudes toward Jews because le Carré's *The Tailor of Panama* includes an uncomfortably Judas-like portrayal of the character Harry Pendel, who is of Jewish descent. Interestingly, le Carré chose to fight back, denouncing Rush from the stage of the 92nd Street Y and taking him on in the Letters section of the *Book Review*.

In all, the past year has produced evidence aplenty that literature is now merely a subcategory within a larger historical, moral debate. Besides Julius's book, a new edition of *Heart of Darkness*, edited by D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, was recently issued, with Conrad's short narrative nestled, as it were, among other texts about the situation in the Congo during the "Civilization of Central Africa" campaign at the turn of the century. This book, with good scholarly intentions, wedges together Conrad's work of informed imagination with historical

<sup>2</sup> Over the past decade or so we have been informed that Plautus was a misogynist, a Louis C. A. Colet was a misogynist, a H. L. Mencklen was a quasi-Nazi and anti-Semite; Philip Larkin was a toxic bully and a bit of a mad bigot; Dorothy Parker was the worst sort of enabler and a promiscuous alcoholic; Orwell was a tool of the Communists, and both were beastly personally. In no case in my memory were the inclinations of the individual under attack not obvious in his or her writing, and in no case have actual readers, as opposed to academic and critics, pretended to care.

documents quite ancillary to its main point, a full complement of details regarding the conditions Conrad had observed (or ignored) during his time in the Congo Basin in 1890. In a relatively evenhanded way, it connects Conrad palpably to the European colonization of the continent that he barely, in *Heart of Darkness*, refers to by name, and it hardens the connection between Conrad and colonial racism made most famous by Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe in a lecture delivered twenty years ago, revised and reprinted in 1987, and made an integral component of the influential Norton Critical Edition of *Heart of Darkness*. It is difficult now to recall that until twenty years ago the issue of colonialism was a relatively minor aspect in serious criticism of Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*.

Edward Said discusses the racial and colonial undertones of *Heart of Darkness* at length in his *Culture and Imperialism*. Said is considerably more careful than a hit man like Julius, and he actually admires artistic creation, for all its frequent and quite necessary blemishes, never wishing a novel or poem or opera away, or requiring it to be something other than what it is. But he takes Conrad's vague references to the superiority of the British to the Belgians of African colonialism a little too far, I think, without giving enough weight to the paradoxical frequent occasions when Conrad's narrator, Marlow, includes essentially every conquering nation past and present in his ironic dismissals: "The conquest of the earth," he remarks dryly near the beginning of the book, "which mostly means the taking away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much."

The "problem" of Conrad is the aforementioned problem of irony; this is much of the "problem" of Eliot as well. What particularly disturbs me about writers like Eliot and Conrad is that they employ such dangerous forms of irony with utter self-confidence and abandon. Readers are made uncomfortable by the insinuation



g suggestions of ugly, painful, destructive redemptions—something not summed up in his “Journey of the Magi” with the lines, “All this as a long time ago, I remember, / and I would do it again, but set down / This set down / This: were we all that way for / Birth or Death? / this Birth was / Hard and bitter / gony for us, like Death, our death.” The ugly and painful redemption of *Heart of Darkness* is contained in Conrad’s assertion that the criminal-abusive Kurtz is “a remarkable man,” one whose language, despite its immorality, has an overpowering effectiveness and force, even in its confusion and incoherence. Achebe cognizes and attacks the centrality of the issue of Kurtz’s moral and psychological condition with his famous mark: “Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of prop for the break-up of one petty European mind?”

Yet it is exactly within the economy of modern literature to reduce an entire continent to a metaphor in the development of a single consciousness. This “arrogance” is exactly the arrogance of the writer, the writer’s prerogative, and I suspect that in the long run Achebe has hit upon the core of our hostility to writers of Conrad’s stature and authority. Obviously, the brush of racism is wide enough to paint over the accomplishments of most artists and intellectuals at work before 1950, so we are guilty of having lived in less enlightened times; we can go back to Aristotle and his famous defense of poetry and work our way forward to Norman Mailer’s condescending essay “The White Negro.” This magazine less than a year ago published an essay by Jane Smiley (author of the “comic” novel *Moo* and a social-work version of *King Lear* called *A Thousand Acres*) in which she unfavorably compared Mark Twain with the still cringe to write the words) Harriet Beecher Stowe, a deranged and hyper-Protestant nineteenth-century Martha Stewart who wrote an unreadably didactic novel called *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Smiley declared Twain a racist on the grounds that Twain, although he likes Jim, doesn’t

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overtly declare Jim his own equal and bow down before him in shame, begging for mercy. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, says Smiley, is a superior novel to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* because of the former's more ennobling vision of African Americans. Smiley's essay demonstrates vividly the necessity of ignoring the literary quality of a work in order to show it to be morally wanting.

If the books published over the last twelve months are a reliable indication, the only defense we have against the educated barbarians is, essentially, the movie critic for *New York* magazine, David Denby, who felt it necessary a few years ago to return to the innocent world of literature as a restorative for his media-weary mind. Denby's maudlin defense of the Western canon, *Great Books: My Adventures with Homer, Rousseau, Woolf, and Other Indestructible Writers of the Western World*, chronicles his return, in the middle of the journey of his life, to Columbia College's core curriculum. At his alma mater he affirms his writerly spirit in the glow of great literature (including, with some arguments, Conrad), not recognizing that even in this broadly civilized curriculum the point of reading seems to have been given over entirely to the realms of the political and the therapeutic. The question university students reading *Heart of Darkness*, for example, are asked to address today, if Denby is a reliable witness, is whether Conrad was defending or condemning Western civilization; that he was doing something entirely more obscure, difficult, and interesting is a problem neither Denby nor the class he attends seems to want to address. The students here, Denby included, read Dante and, as if the *Inferno* existed separately from the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*, conclude that Dante's was a vicious imagination, obsessed with punishment and pain. They read Montaigne, and have him compared with Walt Whitman and D. H. Lawrence, in order to discover, as Professor Edward Taylor puts it, that "those writers are like you guys. You always cherish in your hearts that sense that you're an individual."

It would have been rude, I suppose, to remark at that juncture that Whitman, Montaigne, and Lawrence had to do considerable intellectual and emotional work in order to cherish their individuality, work that these students have not yet done and that few people in any generation do. It is clear that the faculty Denby observed teaching at Columbia, as well as Denby himself, have no fundamental confidence in the merits of the books they teach. Such classes used to begin with the premise that *these are the books before us, and it is our task to determine what they say, what they mean, what their intentions and methods are*. Now, however, we have to concentrate our efforts on the considerably less fruitful matter of making a case for *why it is good for you and me to read these particular books, and how we can flatter ourselves and reaffirm our values in the process*. The implication and even declaration put forward at various points by Denby and the faculty he observed, that the core classes exist for the purpose of helping students create better "selves," go unquestioned, it being necessary to avoid the sad issue of how rarely the knowledge or practice of art makes people better. Nevertheless, there are areas of knowledge that universities once had the nerve to declare simply necessary for their students to study, not in order to be better people or to enjoy themselves but in order to be educated people, in a culture that had certain criteria for what education is.

During my own years at Columbia in the middle and late 1970s, I had friends and acquaintances who performed well in core curriculum courses and showed no signs, then or later, of being morally or spiritually improved by the experience. They knew something more than they otherwise would have, and perhaps there was a cocktail party one day, or a discussion in bed, when what they knew came in handy. For such people, general matters of the intellect, and purely rational or aesthetic explorations of the world and humankind's predicament in it, will always be something of a bafflement or a joke, no matter whose canon is currently used. They and people like them have gone on to become our bosses, our presidents and

senators and policemen. They are certainly our journalists. They are so quite often our children's teachers as well as our doctors and lawyers. They are the vast majority of us, in other words. And unless some vocal component of the cultural apparatus signals them convincingly and often that literature is an important, unique band within the entertainment spectrum, that it has the power both to offend us and to gratify us at the deepest levels, that it has the singular capacity to render the essence of consciousness and the essence of our manners and our history, and that these powers do indeed bestow upon it an authority not necessarily granted to church bulletins or the *Sunday New York Times*, our culture will with easy conscience relegate literature to the realm of children's daytime television programming—something soundly tested for virtue and fractionally required for good schooling.

Anthony Julius, in the short time since the publication of his dissertation on Eliot and anti-Semitism, has been anointed Official Eliot Scold: the long-awaited edition of Eliot's early verse, *Inventions of the March Hare*, much of it famously bawdy and scatological and none of it particularly important, was published in England in late 1996, and immediately Julius was quoted condemning it in the *New York Times*. "They tap, in the most puerile way imaginable, racist fantasies of the sexual superiority of blacks," the critic-divorce lawyer harrumphed. In March the book will be published in the United States by Harcourt Brace, and the howls of injured sensibilities will no doubt fill the air for weeks. Eliot refused to publish these poems in his lifetime because they did not meet his standards; in the new morality-speak they become, in the *New York Times*, "40 Poems That Eliot Wanted to Hide..."

Despite such silliness, Julius's book on Eliot seems to me a landmark because it takes all of the varieties of antics of this kind of moral reading to their highest expression. It is exemplary in its flaws—a kind of über-encyclopedia in its historical moralizing about literature. When, near



nd, Julius refers to his own reading Eliot as an act of "resistance," this word gives much away. That a writer of Eliot's stature and significance must be "resisted" implies that we readers are an oppressed people, tyrannized by our betters. In the professional training ground of Ph.D. programs, this is no doubt a tangible reality: new bodies of literature are needed to keep the profession going, just as corpses are needed in medical schools. Excellence is, professionally speaking, uninteresting and therefore suspect as a criterion. Thus, it has been a central, self-preserving aim of professional criticism over the last twenty years to make great writers appear to be less good than they are and lesser writers appear to be more important and talented. Besides filling an industrial need, this effort is an emotional impulse, the defensive response of an ersatz egalitarian culture to the horror it sees in great literature and the multiple ambiguities that great literature invokes.

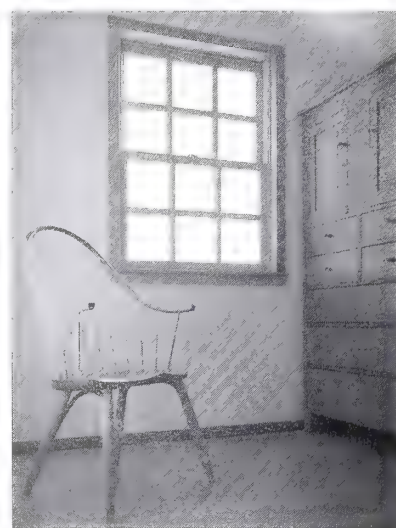
To give Julius his due, he butts his head against these issues at a time when most other academic critics have long ago accepted them as given. Julius believes that in order to make his claims significant he must at least acknowledge Eliot as a major poet, even a great poet, while at the same time skinning him like a rabbit. His problem is therefore as follows: if the poetry contains anti-Semitism it is great poetry, and if the poet is anti-Semite but an admirable figure in twentieth-century letters, then the traditional view of greatness leads me to conclude that Eliot's anti-Semitism doesn't matter. This is an acceptably difficult and dangerous idea. If one can, as Julius tries to do, move from the system of literary values any substantial aesthetic considerations—any sense that literary greatness entails the straining of language and image (even in the degraded and damaged ways that are our inheritance) toward what is good and beautiful and redemptive in the muddled experience of human consciousness—then the problem goes away.

To understand Eliot's poetry, even his early poetry, I believe, it is nec-

cessary to take into account his Christianity. Eliot's religion, Anglo-Catholicism, is a higher-than-high version of Anglicanism only a footstep away from Rome, and his attachment to it seems to have derived from an odd combination of his political mood and his authentic spirituality. It owes a good deal, paradoxically, to the anti-Semite Charles Maurras and Maurras's Action Française, one of the most influential anti-Semitic political movements in pre-World War II Europe. Anti-Semitism was not merely an emotional centerpiece to this politics but a crucial component of its attempt to combat liberal democracy and all that it stands for. Maurras's attachment to Catholicism was entirely unspiritual: in Catholicism, Maurras saw the most effective arm of European social order. Eliot seems to have been led to his conversion through a similar political sentiment, and the social-marching aspect of Christianity held continuing appeal to him long after his conversion had developed into one of the most aesthetically ambitious and compelling sources of devotional art in our century.<sup>3</sup>

As a literary critic Eliot was imprecise and offhanded yet curiously comprehensive. As a social critic he was a monarchist, an antidemocrat. Aesthetically, he was a terrific snob. All of this shows up in his poetry, but it is not the point of his poetry. It was Eliot's constant effort to take the stuff of the neurotic, damaged, modern personality, and the stuff of everyday irritation, anger, fear, loathing, and contempt—the self, in all its horrors—and try to move it toward some divine plateau (toward "extinction," he would say) where the burdens of

<sup>3</sup> His two essays "The Idea of a Christian Society" and "Notes Towards the Definition of Culture," collected together in the volume *Christianity and Culture*, while containing few explicit references to Jews, argue in a theoretical way for a conception of a culture organized by a cohesive, universally Christian society. In a complex appreciation of Eliot, Cynthia Ozick has noted that his ability so calmly to develop this notion in the years just before and after the Second World War—with knowledge of Nazism and, later, the Holocaust yet with no acknowledgment that similar uni-cultural ideas had been given their expression in them—is rather blood-chilling.



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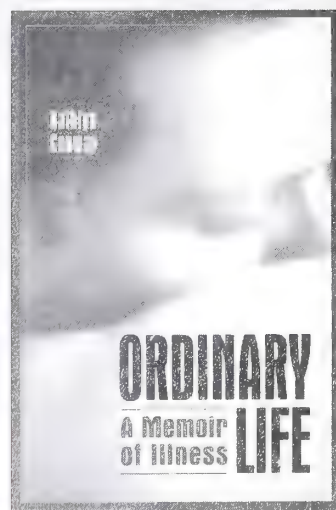
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personality fall away and the truth, painful and retributive though it may be, makes itself known. This effort, this narrative movement toward God, occurs within the poems that predate his conversion, albeit in fairly vague and allegorical terms. Later, after "Gerontion" (1920), "The Waste Land" (1922), and "The Hollow Men" (1925), the effort becomes more explicit. Eventually, after *The Four Quartets* (1943), one can look back over all his poetry and see it as one work (this is the way he attempted to see it) re-creating that movement over a greater period of poetical time.

Even in the prime of Eliot's influence, many readers needed to overlook his Christianity; most who admired his aesthetic achievements and theories had no desire to indulge his monarchical politics and his hyper-old-fashioned High Churchism. A habit of sidestepping his Christianity makes it all the easier to read the less explicitly Christian early poetry, ignoring any hints of spiritual intent. Julius does so, with a passion. He writes at length about the aforementioned anti-Semitic lines from "Gerontion" but seems to have little inkling of what the meaning of the poem that contains them might be.

"Gerontion" is a poem about an old man waiting to die. He resides in a house that serves as the central metaphor of the poem: the house is his life and contains history itself. His life and this history, as he is able to perceive them, are vacant, without ghosts, without issue, without forgiveness. He awaits his death in fear of being devoured, with an overriding sensation of loss. He comes in the end to address some larger Other whom we can take to be God. The passages opening the poem contain the offending lines:

Here I am, an old man, a dry month,  
Beneath to bygone waiting for rain  
I can no longer tell what it is  
nor feel it in the bones of rain  
Nor know the feel of the sea under the heading of  
cutlass,  
Bitten by flies, brought  
My house is a broken tower  
And the Jew squats on the roof and looks at the  
owner,  
Spawned in some estaminet in Antwerp  
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in  
London.

There great coughs at night on the field over  
head;  
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.  
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,  
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish  
gutter.

I am an old man,  
A dull head among windy spaces

Signs are taken for wonders. "We would  
see a sign."  
The word within a word, unable to speak a  
word,  
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvenescence  
of the year  
Came Christ the tiger . . .

The image of the Jew is unpleasant and disturbing, but that he is the owner of the metaphorical house containing history itself suggests something else about him. That he is squatting on the windowsill is scatological, but it also suggests an animal about to leap—Christ the tiger, who, later in the poem, "devours" us. That the Jew was "spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp" furthers the suggestion. "Estaminet" means, in the common parlance, "café" or "bistro." But there is another meaning to the word, one that would have been well known in Antwerp specifically, since it comes from the Walloon dialect spoken in Belgium: it means "manger." Eliot doubles the image of Christ in the manger by appropriating language from the Elizabethan bishop Lancelot Andrewes, who, preaching on the meanings of Advent and Christmas, created the mesmerizing image of the second person of the Trinity, the Logos, now arrived as human infant, as "the word within a word, unable to speak a word." Julius sees none of this. A universe in which a horrifying, hostile, contemptuous image of a "jew" can also be made to suggest God, in his most tender moment of Incarnation as well as in his terrifying justice, is a universe in which Anthony Julius and many other critics steeped in comfortable assumptions would prefer not to live.

Literature is not the game  
for them.

Here are some lines from *The Four Quartets* and the moral monster Eliot:

Sudden in a shaft of sunlight  
Even while the dust moves  
There rises the hidden laughter

Of children in the foliage  
Quick now, here, now, always—  
Ridiculous the waste sad time  
Stretching before and after.

We learn to explain what we read because we have been moved, painfully or otherwise, by what we have read, and we want to understand why, and how, and whether it will happen again. It is from this experience that I formed certain beliefs about Joseph Conrad, about other writers, and, most importantly for the purposes of this discussion, about T. S. Eliot. From many readings of Eliot's work, from reading about his life, and no doubt from projecting my wishes onto his distant figure, I believe that he was an arrogant and selfish man, as so many great artists are (or, perhaps, must be). But I do not believe that he differed from others of his kind because he understood that humility was required of him, whether he managed to muster it or not. I believe that his work expresses a fascinatingly traceable progression from a position of profound moral confusion and disillusionment to one of increasing spiritual wisdom; that when at last he had written the poetry that expressed this progression as well as his own extraordinary language would allow, he stopped seriously writing poetry. I believe that it is a shocking and destructive critical error to assert that his most dramatic moral confusions define him, as it would be to assert that about any person. I believe that great art and great artists have no other moral obligation than to have the courage to dramatize a distinct moral condition, and this Eliot did better than any other poet of his time. Lastly, I believe that Anthony Julius's frequent but unconvincing assertions of Eliot's greatness are contrived, the where Eliot's greatness resides Julius has missed it. He has done so willfully, and many other critics of our day, approaching other great artists, do the same, because it is greatness itself that they resent and must "resist." I believe that they make this mistake not merely for a variety of obvious and boring political reasons but because they recognize, and cannot tolerate, the truth that great art is always partly a rebuke.



# BISHOP'S HOUSE

By Mary Gordon

**T**he Morrisseys bought their house in County Clare in the early Sixties, before the crush of others—Germans mostly—had considered Irish property. It had been a bishop's residence, a bishop of the Church of Ireland, a Protestant, but it had fallen into decay. Repairs had to be done piecemeal. The Morrisseys were both editors at a scholarly press, and they had three children who needed to be educated; it was twenty years before the house was really comfortable for guests.

The house looked out over a valley whose expanse could only be understood as therapeutic. So it was natural, given the enormous number of bedrooms and the green prospect, like a finger on a bruised or wounded heart, that the Morrisseys' friends who were in trouble, or getting over trouble, ended up in the house. Sometimes these visits were more indefinite than Helen would have liked. But she and Richard must have known, buying such a house, that this outcome was inevitable. And it soon began to

seem inevitable that friends from three continents—North America; Australia, where their son lived; and Europe, where they had numerous

on a bench trying not to cry, but tears kept appearing under the lenses of her sunglasses. She was crying because she'd just broken off a ten-year

love affair, and although she hadn't seen Rachel in three years, Rachel was the perfect person to run into if you were crying behind your sunglasses. You'd be able to believe she hadn't noticed, since it was perfectly possible that she hadn't. Rachel was an oboist, and she often seemed not to have too much truck with the ordinary world. She and Lavinia had been roommates at Berkeley in 1964 but had both avoided politics. Not that they were reactionary or opposed to what the demonstrations stood for. In Lavinia's case, it was that she had a horror of anything that she might understand as performance. In Rachel's

case, it was simply that her devotion to her instrument, a mixture of passion and ambition, had cut her off from what might have been called the common mistakes of the era of drugs, sex, and rock and roll.

Lavinia's parents had divorced and remarried, both unsuccessfully, and had divorced and remarried again. When Lavinia was at Berkeley, they



connections—were always showing up, particularly now that the Morrisseys had retired and were spending May to October of every year at Bishop's House.

**L**avinia Willis ran into Rachel, Helen and Richard's daughter, on the 72nd Street subway platform. Lavinia was crying, or rather she was sitting

Mary Gordon is the author of *The Shadow Man*, a memoir. She is at work on *Spending*, a comic-erotic novel.



were on their third partners. This made the decision of where to go on holidays a nightmare, even Rachel could see this. For all her musically abstraction, she had inherited something of her mother's thin skin for people in distress. She invited Lavinia to come home with her for Christmas of their freshman year.

Lavinia slept on a cot in the living room of the Morrisseys' lightless, book-encrusted railroad apartment on the corner of 119th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. But only once; in her sophomore year she left Berkeley to get married. Everyone understood why, or at least they understood that it had something to do with the extreme disorder of her parents' lives. Those who thought the marriage was a good thing were happy that Lavinia would have a comfortable and stable home, for clearly Bradford Willis was the essence of stability. Those who thought Lavinia was rushing into something feared she had inherited her parents' heedlessness, a shaky understanding of marriage learned at her parents' joined or separated knees.

But it surprised everyone that two years into the marriage, when Lavinia was only twenty-one and not finished with her degree at N.Y.U., she became pregnant. Before this, her professors hadn't known quite what to do with her. She was studying history, focusing on the Dutch Renaissance, a period she liked because of its subtlety and attention to detail. They could see she was an outstanding student, but, since she was married, they were reluctant to suggest graduate school. So it was something of a relief to them when she got pregnant: they no longer had to consider her.

Brad was in a management program at Chase Manhattan, and his parents were happy to help them with their rent. They lived on 81st Street between Lexington and Third but moved three blocks north a year and a half later, when, surprising everyone again, Lavinia became pregnant a second time.

In those years, Helen Morrissey was more help than Lavinia would have guessed. She'd drop by once a month with a pot of jam and a book for Lavinia to read, something Lavinia

in her fatigue had to work hard to concentrate on. But the mental effort reassured her, and she was strengthened by Helen's belief that she was still capable of abstract thought.

Helen would come on a Friday morning—she worked a four-day week—and talk to Lavinia about politics. She was a draft counselor and encouraged Lavinia to get involved, but Lavinia said she was in an awkward position generationally; she'd feel uneasy advising men not much younger than herself. She was sure they'd see her as an East Side matron with two children, and it would make her feel finished, done up. Helen absolutely understood; she left Lavinia the address of congressmen and senators to write to, and Lavinia did, regularly, following Helen's instructions, changing the text of her letters slightly each time in case that would mean something.

Lavinia loved Helen because Helen had a way of asking you for things that were a bit difficult for you but not impossible. You felt enlarged doing the thing she asked you for, and never hopeless. She would do things for you, too, but she always made you believe they were things she wanted to do, and if she found them too onerous, she'd stop doing them. She made you feel that her life was full but not overcrowded. She and Richard always seemed to have room for people, partly because they worked as a tag team. More than Richard, Helen would suddenly need to be alone, and would wander off sometimes when someone was in the middle of a sentence, leaving Richard to say to the bewildered speaker, "Yes, yes, I know exactly what you mean." They seemed to swim through people, lifting their heads occasionally to offer a meal, a blanket, a magazine. If you were in trouble, they conveyed their belief that your situation was only temporary. They knew you had it in you to overcome whatever was, at that moment, in your way.

They managed to convey that to their own children because the three of them prospered quietly, unspectacularly. Rachel moved back to New York, where she taught at the Manhattan School of Music and

played in various chamber orchestras. Neal was working in ecological waste management in Melbourne. Clara was the only one who had made money. She and her girlfriend ran a catering business in San Francisco that had, for some reason they didn't understand, become fashionable. When Helen talked about her children, she said she felt they all worked too hard. Only Neal had children, two sets, by his two marriages (his first wife had died in a train wreck), but they were in Australia. So Helen had room, in her grandmotherly imagination, for Lavinia's boys. She liked boys increasingly as she aged, and grew more boyishly valorous herself, more romantic about the untrammelled, the ramshackle, the hand-to-mouth.

When the boys were ten and eleven, Lavinia went to Teachers College at Columbia for a master's degree. She got a job teaching history at the Watson School, the best girls' school in New York. She was considered a thrilling teacher, demanding and imperious, although everyone understood this was a mask thrown up by shyness, and that her heart rejoiced and bled at the triumphs and failures of her girls. They adored her; they fell in love with her. She grew, with middle age, into a surprising voluptuousness: her field-hockey player's body somehow suddenly understood itself. Men looked at her, as she left her thirties, in the dangerous way they'd looked at her mother, a way that, before this time, she'd tried to forestall.

But as she approached forty, it began to seem foolish to forestall it any longer. She had a series of enjoyable but otherwise pointless affairs. One day she was in the back of a cab, changing, under her coat, from a silk blouse to a cotton shirt. She'd left the house in the cotton, to keep Brad from suspecting, and had changed into the silk in the cab on the way to the hotel. Now she had to change back, and wipe the perfume from her neck with a Hand Wipe. She caught a glimpse of herself in the driver's mirror and felt grotesque. She was only thirty-eight.



e'd been married eighteen years, e'd done all right with her marriage. The apartment was elegant; they had a nice house for the weekends in Dutchess County. But here she was, changing her blouse in a cab. Her youthfulness seemed like a threat and a challenge it would be not only stupid but ungrateful to ignore. She knew Brad would be hurt, but she imagined it would take him about a year to remarry. He was shocked, at first, mainly by his failure to foresee the breakup. He was more hurt than she knew, but she was right, within a year and a half he'd married again, a Swiss woman who sometimes wore little hats to dinner parties and who ruled his social calendar with an iron hand.

For several years, again to everyone's surprise, Lavinia didn't settle down. Then she met Joe Walsh, who was so clearly the wrong type that everyone knew it couldn't last, not lasting anyway.

But it went on for ten years. He was a player in the Koch Administration; nobody was exactly sure what he did, only that it was something that had something to do with City Hall. When Koch lost, Joe kept doing whatever it was he did for Perkins, which was unusual, people thought, and must mean that he really knew what he was doing, whatever that was. As all Lavinia's friends began drinking less in the late Eighties, he didn't. For a while, people thought it was just that he was drinking as he always had and they noticed it more because they'd stopped. But then they had to admit to themselves—they wondered if Lavinia had admitted it—that Joe was if not an alcoholic then a problem drinker. He also kept smoking when everyone else had quit, and even took up cigars. One night, after dinner at the Morrisseys' on 119th Street, he earned Richard's enmity forever by putting his cigar out in the water of a glass bowl Helen had filled with nasturtiums. Richard had often used to the transgressions of his friends, his children, and his children's friends, but he adored his wife as if they were new lovers, and seeing her face when the cigar sizzled in the nasturtium water, he knew that

she felt violated, and this he could not forgive.

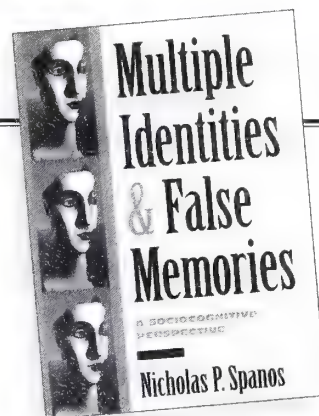
It was soon after that night that Lavinia decided she'd had enough of Joe. Ten years of feverish arguments followed by feverish lovemaking, sour-mouthed morning accusations, resolutions, and recriminations seemed suddenly to settle in her spine like the aftermath of a debilitating fever. She realized that this feeling of bruised exhaustion had become so habitual that she hadn't noticed it. But she noticed it now. And so the next time Joe did something mortifying—he insulted one of their guests on the new color of her hair, asking her who, for God's sake, she thought she was kidding—Lavinia simply said, "I've had enough." It was her apartment they were living in; she gave him a month to find a place to live.

Of course she would have to go somewhere while he was still in the apartment, and she didn't have time to make plans. But plans had to be made. That was why she was crying when she ran into Rachel on the subway platform. "My parents would love to have you, I know they would," Rachel said. "I'll phone them tonight. You're still at the same number?"

Lavinia said yes she was, that was what was ghastly about it. She was sleeping in her son's room, in the bottom bunk of his childhood bed.

The next morning, Helen phoned as if she knew exactly the right moment to call—it was eleven in the morning but Joe had just left for work. She said that of course Lavinia must come to them, but she'd have to get herself to Bishop's House from Shannon. It was only forty-five minutes, but anyway, Helen said, she'd be happier with her own car, she'd want to see the countryside and not be dependent on the Morrisseys to shepherd her.

Lavinia left two days after she spoke to Helen. She slept five hours of the six-hour flight, so she hadn't a lot of time for speculating about what her stay at Bishop's House would be like. She knew it would leave her feeling quiet and without malice—"all passion spent" was the phrase that kept going through her head. She reminded herself that Helen and



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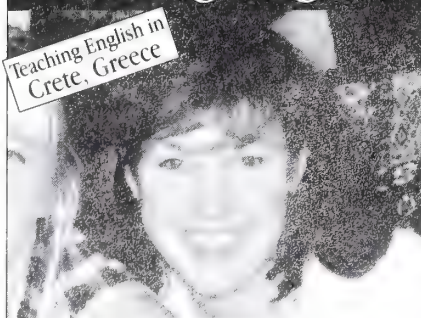
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Richard were eighty and eighty-two, and was prepared to do a lot of the cooking.

**T**he drive from Shannon was as easy as Helen had said it would be. Lavinia had never been to Ireland before, and kept trying to resist making clichéd remarks to herself about the quality of the greenness. But she couldn't help it; it was so purely green, so without blue or yellow, or purple even, that she wanted it in her mouth, which felt scalded from recriminations, or against her eyelids, which felt thin and lacerated by hot tears.

She'd bought a dozen bagels and two pounds of hazelnut coffee, which she knew Helen especially liked. They'd be pleased by the gift, its cheapness, its knowledge of their habits. The coffee smell seeped through the shiny fabric of her suitcase and made her anxious for arrival, anxious to feel at home.

**T**he front of Bishop's House was white stucco. Old trees surrounded it, elms and chestnuts, at once domestic and venerable. The kind, Lavinia thought, you just don't get in America. There were two cars parked in front of the house, a small white Ford and a black convertible sports car—a 1965 Karmann Ghia, Lavinia knew, because Brad's parents had bought them one as a wedding present. It was in perfect condition, and Lavinia wondered if restoring old cars was a hobby Richard had taken up. It seemed unlikely.

How wonderful they looked, Lavinia thought, both of them opening their arms to embrace her. They were so American, the best of America, forthright and reserved and generous. They became more themselves as they grew older, softer and more tolerant. Tears of love came to her eyes, and she buried them in the wool of Richard's shoulder.

"I'll take you to your room," Helen said. The huge black front door opened to a hallway tiled black and white. Almost directly behind the door was a wide mahogany staircase with a red stair carpet faded in places from the sun. Lavinia's room was the

second door from the staircase; she knew from Rachel that Bishop's House had six bedrooms.

"You look done in," Helen said. "You probably want a sleep, but I'd resist it. Try to stay awake till nine or so, get yourself on Irish time. I'll make coffee and we'll have a walk."

"Look what I've brought you," Lavinia said, flourishing her Zabar's bags.

"Hazelnut," said Helen. "You're a perfect angel, as always. I'm afraid I'm not, neither perfect nor an angel. I'm afraid I'm a bit of an old fool. I've allowed something stupid to happen."

Lavinia's heart sank; she was afraid Helen was going to tell her that she was ill, or that Richard was, and that she'd have to leave because one of them was going to the hospital. She couldn't bear the thought; she could have taken the illness or death of one of her own parents more lightly than Helen or Richard's. It was absolutely essential to the well-being of the world that they be in it.

Helen sat down on the bed and patted it so that Lavinia would sit beside her.

"Do you remember our friend Nigel Henderson?"

"I'm afraid I don't," Lavinia said.

"You must have met him one time or another. He and his wife, Liz, lived next door to us for three years. He was on some kind of reverse lend-lease to Columbia back in the Seventies. They're English. Perhaps you were too busy with the children."

"I'm not young enough for you to be erasing whole decades," Lavinia said.

"Nonsense, you're a baby. It's just that you're getting over a love affair. It makes everyone feel ancient," Helen said, making Lavinia wonder, for the first time, if she'd been unfaithful to Richard.

"Poor old Nigel," Helen said. "He's sort of a mess. Liz left him for a woman, and he stopped taking an interest in teaching. He shackled up with one of his students and took early retirement. They were going to live in Bali or something, but it never came off. She took off instead.

Anyway, here he is, no job, no girlfriend, and I'm afraid he's just been told he has terminal cancer."

"How terrible!" Lavinia said. "How old is he?"

"Fifty-six."

"My age," Lavinia said.

"So you see, when he phoned me days ago, really sounding desperate, asking if he could come over on the car ferry, we didn't feel we could say no."

"Of course not," Lavinia said.

"He's always been a bit pathetic, one of those overgrown boys, but this is really dreadful."

"Dreadful," said Lavinia.

"And dreadful for you. You come here to be petted and recover your spirits and we turn you into an angel of mercy."

"Maybe it'll be good for me," Lavinia said. "Put my own troubles in perspective."

"And there's always the Irish countryside. Nothing can spoil that."

The kitchen was in the basement and was dark, but Helen had made it cheerful with flowering plants and brightly colored pottery. Richard was at the stone sink, filling an electric kettle.

"Angelic Lavinia brought us some hazelnut coffee," Helen said.

"Good God," a voice said from the other, darker end of the kitchen. "You Americans can never leave well enough alone."

"This is Nigel," Helen said. "We make him go to that dark corner if he has to smoke."

There are some bodies that belong to a particular time period, Lavinia thought. Medieval bodies, eighteenth-century bodies. Nigel Henderson's was the Sixties model. He was long-legged and narrow-chested; his jeans were tight, and he wore sandals with a leather ring for his big toe. His hair was gray and wavy, and he wore it to his shoulders.

He walked toward her. "Somehow in all my ghastly years in New York we managed not to meet—which made them even ghastlier."

His eyes traveled from Lavinia's breasts to her thighs in a way that made her feel the time difference. It was 4:00 A.M. in New York and she wanted to be asleep.



"I'll just help Helen with the coffee," she said. "We all know Richard's less."

"Unfair, unfair," Richard said.

"Perfectly true," Helen said. "I only put up with him for his conversation."

**H**elen walked with Lavinia through what she called "our field." Nothing grew there but grass, and Helen apologized for that. It made her feel like a tourist, she said, wasting the country's riches, but she really wasn't up for raising cattle or even keeping goats.

"I think it's all right, Helen. The country's lucky to have you."

Helen frowned. She hated being complimented, and Lavinia knew that and felt slapped.

"I wouldn't be surprised if Nigel had his charms out on you. I suppose it's understandable, given what he's facing right now, but it might be more for you. On the other hand, it might be amusing for you. I can never tell."

"Tell what?"

"What, or who, young women find attractive. Or anyone, for that matter. Of course he's attracted to you. I suppose it's unfair of us, offering him a bed down the hall from which a sexy girl."

"Hardly a girl, Helen," she said.

"That's how I think of you, and a sure Nigel does, too."

For a moment, Lavinia liked thinking of herself as a young girl, walking down a street, her step unsteady with the knowledge that all eyes that fell on her desired her. But only for a moment. Then she realized her body was tired, worn out, fed up, and what she wanted was not sex but replenishment and rest.

"Oh God, Lavinia, I'm afraid we've put you in an awful spot. I hope at least he'll leave you alone to read and talk. And the lake just down the road here is lovely for swimming, if you can bear the cold, which I know you can because of your summers in Maine. I know he can't stand it. He's always complaining about the cold. And he's a late riser. So get up early with me, we'll have breakfast together. I'll make a lunch for you, and you can pack it on your back with a book

and be on your own. And thank God you have your car."

It sounded like a good plan, a refreshing plan, and Lavinia knew that was what Helen meant. But it made her feel a little sick, both fearful and ashamed, her childhood feeling when she was being packed off somewhere, sent off for someone else's idea of her pleasure.

Richard and Helen didn't modify their policy of leaving their guests to themselves because Nigel had terminal cancer, or because when he was left alone he seemed to do nothing but take over the sofa in the pretty sitting room, empty Richard's whiskey bottles into his glasses, and fill the clear air with the smoke of his cigarettes. He left the packets—Silk Cuts—in the grate of the fireplace. They collected there until someone—Helen probably—removed them. It was summer, no one was lighting fires. Did he think, Lavinia wondered, that his packets just disappeared? She wanted to say that to him, and she wanted to ask him if he thought it was good for someone with terminal cancer to go on smoking, or didn't he feel that all that smoking had brought him to this pass. But she didn't say anything because she didn't want to upset Helen and Richard, who could only go on as they did if they believed their guests were getting on just fine.

Nigel wanted attention—from the Morrisseys, from Lavinia—but he went about getting it exactly the wrong way, as wrongheadedly as a child who will never win his parents' love and whose very gesture leeches what little sense of duty they might have. Helen walked in the mornings. Lavinia sometimes joined her but only sometimes, on the days that Helen specially asked her to. She knew if Helen didn't ask her it was because she wanted to be alone. In the afternoons, if it was warm, Helen swam in the little lake, and she did want Lavinia's companionship. Richard didn't swim, but she made him come with her if no one else was swimming, in case "I get a heart attack and disappear."

Helen said it matter-of-factly, as she might have said, "In case there are no bananas in the market today."

This was the way the Morrisseys dealt with their age. Nothing was avoided, but nothing was dwelt on longer than it should be. They always made you feel, Lavinia thought, that they knew how to live. That was why it was good to be around them, and that was why Lavinia said nothing to Nigel, even at his most unpalatable.

She said nothing when she opened the door after her bath and found him leaning on the wall right across from the bathroom, slouched against it like a juvenile delinquent, smoking one of his endless cigarettes. And she said nothing when one night he'd had too much wine to drink and went on a tirade about what he called today's woman. "Womb-man. They have a womb, but they want to be men."

"I mean, for God's sake," he said. "Anatomical differences count for something. Men have more strength. Women can rear and nurse children. I mean, shouldn't that tell us all something? Or am I quite mad? Perhaps I am quite mad. That's what Liz thought. No, I'm wrong. That's not what she thought at all. She just thought I was stupid. Plain stupid. 'You think with your cock,' she said. That was her greatest insult. And precisely that dyke's greatest asset. Made her brain clean: no cock to cock it up."

"I'll just make coffee for everyone," Helen said.

Richard suggested that perhaps one day soon, if the weather was good, they might all drive up to Coole Park, where Lady Gregory had lived, and see the tree where Yeats and Synge had carved their names.

"I mean, really that's what it was all about with Liz. She couldn't stand that I had a penis and she didn't. That's what it all came down to. She rejected my penis out of her own bloody envy at not having one."

"I think that's been considered and rejected as a theory," Lavinia said. She looked at Richard's disappointed eyes and wished that she'd kept her resolve of saying nothing.

"Wall, wot wuz yer problem," he said in what he thought was an American accent. "Was your husband's cock too big or not big enough?"

"Nigel, you must go to bed now,"



said Helen. "You seem overtired."

He covered his face with his hands. Lavinia thought that his hands were his best feature; he should have covered his face with them all the time. Then she could see that he was weeping. His shoulders shook and he began sobbing loudly, with no impulse to silence himself or to stop.

"I'm not overtired, Helen. As you perfectly well know. I'm drunk, and I'm dying."

It would have helped if there had been some background noise: the ticking of a clock, the rumble of a dishwasher. But there was no sound in the room at all; it was a mark of how simply the Morrisseys lived. And simply, they had to sit in the tumult of noise Nigel was making and endure it, unadulterate. Then Nigel stood and shook himself like a wet dog. He walked up the stairs, saying goodnight to no one.

"Oh God," Helen said after she'd heard his door close. "I behaved like a fool. The poor, poor desperate creature. He's dying and he has not one real human connection. And I made it worse."

"No, Helen," Richard said.

"Well, I didn't make it better."

"That's as may be," he said. "But you didn't make it worse, and there's a difference."

"And you did make it better—both of you," Lavinia said. "He feels less alone here. Less as though life were ridiculous, or hopeless, or absurd. You make everyone feel that."

"Well, we could all use a rest," Richard said, pointing the way up the staircase, which Nigel had climbed in the dark.

**L**avinia couldn't sleep. There was a full moon and the muslin curtains didn't keep it out. It made a pool of not quite light—but illumination—on the oak floorboards. She thought of all the people who'd slept in this room before her, most of them long dead. And Nigel was facing death alone. What was it like to him? Was he looking down a long, dark corridor? A well? Or into an endless sky? She wondered if he was terrified or numbed. She wondered what it would be like for her.

It would be different. She would have her children, her friends, students whose lives she'd touched. It wouldn't be what it was for Nigel: that horrible aloneness, that sense that you'd been given a life, that it was being taken from you and you'd done nothing with it but make a mess.

She was thinking of him so intently that she wasn't surprised when she saw the knob turn and the door open. He stood in the doorway, framed by the light from the hall.

"Do you mind?" he said.

"No, not at all."

He walked directly to the bed and sat down on it. She propped herself up on her elbow. He kissed her; his mouth was rough from cigarettes and wine. His hair was a little unclean, and she could smell his armpits, not dirty, exactly, but unfresh. None of that mattered. He was alone and he was dying. She could give him this, if this was what he wanted. They both knew that it could be his last time.

He nuzzled her breasts halfheartedly. He knew what he was after. He didn't make much attempt to arouse her, they both knew it wasn't about that. He finished, and lay on top of her a few moments. Then he said, "At moments like these, I need a cigarette. Do you mind if I turn on the light?"

She put on her nightgown and looked around for an ashtray, but of course there wasn't one.

"It's all right, I'll flick it out the window."

"Careful," she said. "We don't want to wake Richard and Helen."

"What's the matter? You don't want them to know what you've been up to?"

"No, I don't want to disturb their sleep."

"What do you think they'd say? That you were a nasty girl or an angel of mercy? Jezebel or Florence Nightingale?"

"There's no need to be unpleasant."

"I don't do it out of need. I just seem to be rather good at it. Which is why I find myself alone most of the time."

He was challenging her to meet his eye, but she wouldn't.

"It's remarkable how many friends

a death sentence brings you. For instance, yourself. You'd never let me have you if you didn't think I was on my way to never-never land."

"That's not true."

He snorted. "Oh, get off it. You're not going to tell me you're fond of me, or that you found me strangely irresistible. You fucked me because you think I'm going to die."

"Nigel, there's no need for this."

"You're feeling quite good about the whole thing," he said. "You're generous and mature, and womanly. You gave of yourself. The supreme sacrifice. Like wartime. Give him a little of what he fancies before the artillery gets him. But suppose I told you it was all bullshit? Suppose I told you the biopsy report came back and I was given a clean bill of health?"

"I don't believe you," she said.

"Oh, my dear, it's quite true. I did have a tumor. You see here—" He took her hand and made her feel indentation in his thigh. "The quacks said it was quite possibly malignant. Well, I was scared at that, and I fell apart, rather. And I let people. I thought, why the hell not. And people were wonderful. I mean, fucking heroic. Better to me than they'd ever been. And of course whose parental bosom did I want to rest my head on but good old Helen and Dick's? Normally, I wouldn't have had the nerve to invite myself. But I called up, told them the news calmly, like a good soldier. So they said, of course, dear, come right on the fucking car ferry. Only just before I left, the doctor called. Quite thrilled. Benign, old chap, he said. Apparently I'll live forever."

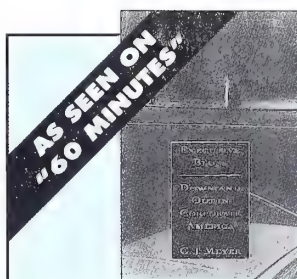
"Well, I couldn't tell Helen and Richard that. Think how disappointed they'd be. Dying, I had a certain tragic interest. Healthy, I'm just a pathetic pain in the ass. And think how they've always loved being useful, still, clear pond for the world's lame ducks. Why, they wouldn't know what to do with themselves if everyone's life was shipshape. They must know it. Certainly you know it. Still, they are a couple of old dears. And not as young as they once were. Which is why I know you'll keep your dirty little secret. Won't you, love?"

He reached over to kiss her.



"You're disgusting," she said.  
 "That's as may be, but I've just  
 got you, haven't I?"  
 "Get out," she said.  
 "Right you are. And I'll clear out  
 the morning. Everyone will under-  
 stand that I'm abashed after my little  
 episode last night. And I'll let  
 them know you were a real  
 help. A great comfort."

He wanted to go to the bath-  
 room to brush her teeth. His foulness  
 was in her mouth. But she didn't  
 want him to hear her doing it.  
 She wondered if it were possible  
 to make him believe that the whole  
 thing meant nothing to her—that  
 she went to bed with anyone, ab-  
 solutely everyone, because it was eas-  
 ier than saying no. But she had no  
 idea how she would do that.  
 He wasn't stupid. He seemed to  
 understand things very well. He'd  
 often made her see the Morrisseys in a  
 way she must always have known  
 was possible but had always avoided.  
 Were they parasites, feeding off the  
 misery of others for their own pros-  
 perity? Was the misfortune of those  
 they called their friends the elixir  
 that kept them safe? That kept them  
 from the kinds of risks that could  
 distort or wreck a life? The kinds of  
 risks she'd taken, and her parents  
 had, and Nigel and his wife and his  
 wife's girlfriend? But not the Mor-  
 risseys. And not their children.  
 She'd have to stay a couple of  
 more days so it wouldn't appear that  
 her leaving had to do with Nigel's.  
 Perhaps the day after tomorrow  
 they'd all go to Coole Park. She'd  
 take them out to a good restaurant.  
 They'd talk about Nigel, the pity of  
 the waste. They would say she  
 must come back to Bishop's House  
 soon. Perhaps next summer.  
 But she wouldn't. She couldn't  
 stay. And when the Morrisseys came  
 back to New York, what would hap-  
 pen then? They were getting older.  
 They'd be needing help. But there  
 would be hundreds of people who'd  
 want to help them, grateful, eager  
 people. They wouldn't need her.  
 After a while they might say, "We  
 haven't heard much of Lavinia late-  
 ly." They'd assume it was because  
 she was happy.



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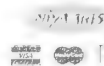
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# LOST ATLANTIS

Nude scientists, giant sharks,  
bad vibes, and me  
By Ptolemy Tompkins

**I**n the summer of 1975, when I was thirteen, I lived for a brief period with my father and stepmother on Bimini, a small Bahamian island fifty miles off the coast of Florida. My father was engaged at the time in investigating a group of giant stones that lay in the shallow water several hundred yards off Bimini's northern shore. It was his fond and earnest hope that these stones might prove to be the vestiges of the lost continent of Atlantis and that they were but the first of many such ruins to emerge from the sea after being hidden for some 10,000 years. Atlantis, my father suspected, was on the rise and would soon be back for all to see.

Four years before our move to Bimini, he had finished work on

*Ptolemy Tompkins is the author of The Tree Grows Out of Hell: Mesoamerica and the Search for the Mayan Lost City, The Memon, Paradise Fever: A Journey from the Dawn of the New Age, and others, published by Avon Books this fall.*



*Secrets of the Great Pyramid*, a book arguing that the ancient Egyptians possessed a body of wisdom about the universe and the place of human beings within it that far surpassed anything the modern world had to offer. Two years later, with his friend Christopher Bird, he produced *The Secret Life of Plants*, which made the claim that plants were conscious beings capable of communicating and communing with humans. Plants were such spiritually evolved organisms, my father's research suggested, that if we

listened to them tentatively they could teach us how to live more happily and harmoniously on Earth—so harmoniously in fact, that the planet could be transformed, in my father's words, into “a new Eden.”

By the mid-1970s, my father had become a kind of walking, talking concatenation of the sort of ideas that today go under the general umbrella of “new age.” Bearded, bald, with a perpetually intense, preoccupied

expression (as a young child I suspected that he must have lost his hair from thinking too much), he was an appearance and character perfectly suited for this role. Without much in the way of conscious calculation, it instead just by being himself, he became the definitive example of the Fringe Investigator: the familiar figure with the whitening beard, khaki button jacket, and unfazable open mind who was forever lurking on the outer edges of accepted science and conventional thinking. From Peter Tompkins you could always count on learning the



impossible wasn't really impossible at all, and that your not having been alerted to this fact was due purely to the untiring efforts of the self-serving charlatans in the academic community who were working overtime to keep you in the dark. He was the one to tell you that ancient astronauts may have once visited Earth; that psychic surgeons might cure your operable cancer; that the ancient Egyptians possessed magical techniques for levitating 2,000-pound rocks, and that you yourself might have been one of those Egyptian magicians in a previous incarnation.

From David Suskind to Mike Douglas to Dick Cavett, my father eventually made it on to almost all the talk shows of the time, usually in the company of a representative of the scientific community with whom he was expected to fall into passionate and vitriolic disagreement. The standard sequence of events would be for the host to introduce my father and then stand back while he furrowed his eyebrows menacingly and described whatever unusual phenomena he had been investigating that week. In the appearances immediately following the publication of the plant book, a table full of plants would usually appear at this point, one of them attached to a galvanometer—a lie-detecting device—that my father's friend Cleve Backster had found could register what appeared to be the emotional reactions of plants as well as humans. The plants would then be threatened with uprooting or burning, and the TV cameras would zoom in on the galvanometer's wildly fluctuating needle. Finally, a suitably dour scientist would emerge, and he and my father would square off like a pair of fighting cocks in a Mexican bar, trading accusations for however much airtime remained to be filled.

My father brought a unique intensity to the ideas he explored in those years. When he argued that the ancients had lived in an expanded state of harmony and integration, the way back into which was open to all if they would but listen to the whisperings of the very plants they ate and walked upon, the urgency of his conviction incited as much admiration

as the message itself. For my father it was not enough to simply believe in or publicize such possibilities. One needed, most of all, to act.

That was why, at the beginning of the summer of 1975, I found myself on Bimini. My father had long held an interest in Atlantis because of the emphasis placed on it in the work of Rudolf Steiner, the remarkable teacher and philosopher who founded the Anthroposophical movement and the Waldorf schools in Germany during the early decades of this century. Through his clairvoyant reading of history, Steiner claimed to have witnessed the unfolding of Atlantean civilization over the course of thousands of years, as well as the gradual birth of our own civilization from out of its ruins. The notion that a part of Atlantis lay in the Bahamas, however, had come not from Steiner but from another Atlantean clairvoyant named Edgar Cayce—the famous “sleeping prophet.” A mild-mannered Midwesterner who began his life as a stationery salesman and Sunday-school teacher, Cayce gained an enormous following as a result of his ability to diagnose and cure illnesses while in a state of trance. In the course of these diagnoses, Cayce was given to making lengthy asides on other topics, many of which took the waking, everyday Cayce quite aback when he heard about them later. A good number of these strange asides concerned Atlantis. It was the entranced Cayce's opinion that the lost continent would re-emerge in the late twentieth century from the depths of the Atlantic, where it had lain since its submergence in a great cataclysm that occurred some 10,000 years ago. In a trance statement made in 1940, he went so far as to specify 1968 or '69 as the year when the first fragments would begin to appear.

The Bimini Road, as the collection of sunken stones my father had come to investigate was called, did not dramatically rise up out of the ocean depths in 1968, but that was the year it first came to public notice, and this coincidence struck my father as impressive enough to call for action. Loaded down with income from *The Secret Life of Plants*

and enticed by the idea of proving the legitimacy of Cayce's prophetic work to the nay-saying scientific community, he had organized this expedition in the hopes of producing a film about the Road that would either establish or demolish its claim to Atlantean origin once

and for all.

The Bimini Road stretches for almost 2,000 feet along the sandy ocean bottom, roughly paralleling the shore of North Bimini. At the northern end, the stones curve around to form the shape of a rough backward J, then appear to stop as abruptly as they began. Leading nowhere, and made up of stones far too big and widely spaced for any vehicle—ancient or modern—to make use of, the Road isn't really a road at all. Nor, according to the views of most of the geologists who had examined it prior to our trip, was it a wall, a sunken boat harbor, an ancient temple to some forgotten god, or any other such romantic item. It was simply a length of soft, porous stone that time and chance had eroded in such a way that it gave the illusion of having been shaped by human hands.

Many things to many people, the Road was to me one thing above all others: boring. Try as I might, I could not conjure up, nor could I understand, the kind of anguish and enthusiasm that my father and his friends seemed to suffer over it. Swimming above this huge trail of squarish boulders with the other divers, I never failed to find them somehow uninspired, and I could not help but think that our time in the Bahamas would be better spent doing something—anything—else. Yet day after day all such possibilities went uninvestigated as we languished, anchored over the Road in a sixty-foot sailboat chartered for the adventure, while my father and the rest of his friends tinkered endlessly around its edges with their cameras and instruments.

My failure to appreciate the Road was mirrored by a similar lack of enthusiasm for other aspects of my father's world. It seemed that the more public his life became, the more removed I found myself becoming from



it. Talking plants, lost civilizations—the whole gamut of his interests, which could always be counted on to inspire everything from fascination to disdain to outright anger in others—left me determinedly unmoved. It was not that I didn't admire my father, or that I necessarily questioned his stranglehold on the mysteries of the universe. It was just that I didn't care.

“When,” my father asked gruffly one morning up on the bow, “are we going to get you out of those abominable trunks?”

Today, as every day, I was clothed in a T-shirt and bathing suit, which separated me from the majority of the adults, who, other than the occasional pair of sneakers or sun hat, wore nothing. In front of the cameras, behind them, or somewhere in between, if you were involved in the Atlantis project and wearing clothing, my father would eventually have something to say about it. Nudity was not so much an option in my father's mind as a badge of honor: a sign, as it were, that you were on the Atlantis team.

This persistent presence of naked human bodies—young and old, male and female, toned and worn—had a less than totally positive effect on me. As the summer wore on, I found myself in the odd position of feeling envious of my friends back at school, for whom female bodies were items of supreme mystery rather than everyday scenery. Deprived of this romantic distance, the human form—more specifically the female human form—was taking on a distressingly mundane aura for me while at the same time retaining its intense adolescent desirability. All the variously shaped breasts and distressingly concrete genitalia I was forced to maneuver among out on the boat each day were turning into false idols: objects I was at once drawn helplessly toward yet at the same time distrustful of. I found this combination of elements deeply irritating, not to mention confusing, and I responded by affecting a mood of total—if false—disregard for all of it. I made a point of being clothed as much as possible and looked with in-

creasing disdain upon the Atlantis hunters with whom, it seemed, I was destined to spend my entire summer.

My father, in his distracted fashion, was monitoring my behavior and trying to fathom it. Somehow it was beyond his comprehension that a thirteen-year-old boy should insist on remaining clothed all the time while on a boat in the middle of the Caribbean. Like just about everything else he trained his attention on for long enough, this apparent disinterest had certain implications in his eyes. By refusing to parade around naked at odd and inconvenient times, and by looking askance at those who did, I was doing more than just being difficult. I was placing myself in the company of the naysayers, the advocates of the mundane and the ordinary, who wanted to prove that the Road was no road at all but simply a meaningless geological accident.

“You guys look like idiots running around naked the way you do,” I told him. “Besides, it's dangerous.”

My father shook his head bemusedly. “Dangerous! What an absolutely ridiculous idea. I suspect it's that school we spend so much money on that feeds you these curious puritanical notions. We'll have to have you deprogrammed by the time you're ready to graduate.”

“I suppose you think the Atlanteans all walked around naked?”

“That has absolutely nothing to do with it, nothing at all.”

He paused for a moment and glowered back down at the stern of the boat, his assorted worries visibly regaining their hold over him. Then, collecting himself as if he were about to address some greater audience, he turned back to me.

“Do you know what all this is really about?”

“All what? This boat and everything?”

“Yes, this boat and everything.”

“No.”

“It's about freedom. The freedom to do as you like when you like and not get sucked into some artificial system of laws that tell you what to do and what not to do. That's why I'm here looking at this damn Road, and that's why I've chartered this

bloody boat, and that's why I'm hemorrhaging money keeping all these machines running.”

“I don't get it,” I said. “I mean, what does being naked have to do with the Road?”

“It has everything to do with the Road,” my father pronounced with satisfaction. “The academic establishment says Atlantis never existed when there's plenty of solid evidence that says it did. Now, just why in the face of this evidence, should they be so intent on denying its existence outright?”

“I don't know. Maybe they just don't feel like believing in it.”

“If they had the honesty to give an answer like that, I'd have a good deal more sympathy for them. In fact, you've hit the nail on the head. They don't feel like believing in it. Not at all. And the reason they don't is because believing in it would force them to rewrite every last one of their history books from Chapter One on, and that is something they very definitely do not want to do, rather than open themselves to the possibility that they don't really know what was going on twenty or perhaps fifty thousand years ago on this planet, they simply close their ears and their eyes and cry ‘Bullshit’ at all the evidence that's presented without looking at it. They're no different from a bunch of demented schoolmasters at some wretched Dickensian parochial school, telling you the way things are and whipping you if you point out to them that they aren't that way at all. If there's one thing I'd be happy to take away from being around all this crazy stuff it's the importance of that—of being free to say and do what you think, regardless of the consequences and even if everybody tells you you're out of your mind.”

It was rare for my father to be on the bow, where not much in the way of work went on. When he left the cluttered stern, it was usually in order to avoid something, and to say that something was the Remora. The most costly and sophisticated of the many technical devices enlisted to chronicle the Road, the Remora was a sort of giant winged torpedo with a camera at its front end. It was



ainchild of Dimitri Rebikoff, a  
rench inventor and fellow Atlantis  
thusiast, who had come along  
th it down to Bimini. Presumably,  
e sophisticated camera it housed  
ould allow the divers to capture the  
oad on film more successfully than  
ndheld cameras would, but the  
ore important, unspoken reason for  
le Remora's presence was the high-  
h mystique it lent the enterprise.  
thered to the surface by a power  
ble, it glided impressively to and  
above the Road like a great me-  
anical fish, with divers clinging to  
flanks. Or at least it did on the  
ys when it worked. On this partic-  
ar day, however, it was paralyzed  
some failure deep in its mechani-  
l insides and lay on the stern  
 midst a mass of cables like a great  
aptured sea beast, with Rebikoff  
d several of his assistants hovering  
er it. My father, apparently unable  
en to look at the repair process  
hout losing his temper, gazed poi-  
ously out to sea.

Nothing makes a mockery of hu-  
an endeavor like the ocean. All  
ound us, beyond the noise of the  
at and the people on it, the sea  
d sky lay spread out with what  
emed a deep and resolved indiffer-  
ce to the entire project. Beneath  
the blurry white Road lay with  
ual tranquillity, unconcerned with  
e buzzing engines and laboring  
ople, unconcerned with whether  
e Remora would be fixed or  
ether its own true origin was At-  
nean or otherwise.

"So what are you going to do if it  
ns out the Road is just a bunch of  
gular old rocks?"

"Then I will have laid the ques-  
on to rest, and that will be the end  
it. Because whatever that Road  
ns out to be, it doesn't take away  
e bit from what I just told you.  
e one important thing in life is  
iving the freedom to find out  
at's bullshit and what's true and  
al, and to go after the true and the  
al with all of your energy. If you  
n't have that, there's not much  
int going and looking for any-  
ing else."

"So how come I'm not free to  
ar a bathing suit without you bug-  
g me about it all the time?"

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#### NOTES FOR "TRIPLETS II"

Note: Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (\*).

ACROSS: 12. \*; 13. \*; 16. unke(M.)pt; 18. homonym; 19. ro(o)d; 20. r(i)ot; 22. r (needed<sup>1</sup>)kl; 23. pa's(s)ecutary; 27. \*; 30. hu(man)e; 32. gen-II; 34. \*; 36. \*; 37. to-(naps)-let DOWN: 7. \*; 8. or-d(ivist)ure; 9. l(i)nes\*-on; 10. \*; 11. \*; 14. Pie B; 15. sree(n); 21. \*; 25. \*; 26. G-l'd-get; 28. am-up (rev.); 29. \*; 30. hidden; 31. real\*(ake); 35. sol(o).

SOLUTION TO DECEMBER 1996 DOUBLE ACROSTIC (NO. 168). JONATHAN SWIFT: A CRITICAL ESSAY (UPON THE FACULTIES OF THE MIND). How can the Opinion be true, that the University was formed by a fortuitous Concurrence of Atoms, which I will no more believe, than that the accidental Jumbling of the Letters in the Alphabet, could fall by Chance into a most ingenious Treatise of Philosophy.

CONTEST RULES: Send the quotation, the name of the author, and the title of the work, together with your name and address, to Double Acrostic No. 169, Harper's Magazine, 606 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to Harper's, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by January 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to Harper's Magazine. The solution will be printed in the February issue. Winners of the November 1996 Double Acrostic (No. 167) are Suzanne Gile, Miami, Florida; Catherine Boss, Silver Spring, Maryland; and Joan M. Thibodeau, Danbury, Connecticut.







"He doesn't know. He wants to find out, though. He's like a seeker of the unexplained or something. He wanted that thing about talking to plants."

"Oh, man. Your father's the plant guy? I guess he doesn't do any fishing now. What kind of boat you have?"

"A sailboat, and I can't fish from it because the line always gets tangled in the keel and everyone gets mad at me. I asked if we could go deep-sea fishing, but my father says it costs too much."

"Your father has a point," said Scott. "Unless, that is, you happen to have a boat of your own. A fishboat."

"Like we do," said Phil.

"Tell you what, kid," said Scott. "After tomorrow we're having a contest. We'll take us to a spot off Cat Cay. I've guaranteed us we'll catch something. Seeing as you're such a dedicated sportsman, it seems like a shame for you to miss it. Maybe you can come along . . . if your pop's all right with it."

"Sure," said Phil. "We can always use another steady hand."

**I**m going shark fishing tomorrow," I told my father the next morning, as much to hear how the words sounded out in the air as anything else, for of course there was no question of my not being permitted to go. "I met these guys on the sea last night, and they're going to take me with them on their boat."

"Shark fishing," my father said, his eyes on the Remora as it moved past out in the water. "Now, there's a good way of spending one's time! Any boy on earth would you want to go and harass some glorious beast by dragging it up on the end of a rope? You're free to do as you like, of course, but keep in mind that there are consequences to actions. Everything produces results in life, you know—everything. Do you know what they found wrong with the Remora the other day?"

"What?"

"Nothing! Not a bloody thing. Mikoff tells me he can't figure out why it wasn't functioning, and now it's coasting along without a hitch!

Now, how do you suppose that could be. Any ideas?"

"No."

"Then I'll tell you. Vibes!"

"Vibes?"

"Yes, vibes. There's been a lot of negative thought-energy on this project in the last several days, and the machines have been picking up on it. What you have to understand is that everything in life—absolutely everything—is alive and reacts to what you think about it."

"Then how come I can't make stuff do what I want just by thinking, like on *I Dream of Jeannie* or something?"

"What the hell is *I Dream of Jeannie*?"

"It's a TV show where this genie makes stuff disappear or move around just by thinking about it."

"Hmm. Well, if you really put your mind to it you could. Rudolf Steiner says the Atlanteans started out with a kind of thought-energy that could affect the environment, and that the misuse of that energy was what ultimately brought them to an end."

"You mean they thought the wrong kind of thoughts?"

"They did indeed. And their psychic abilities were so advanced in comparison to ours that those negative thoughts actually had the capability to alter their environment—to destroy their entire world, in fact."

The Remora, with two divers clinging to its sides and its dark power cable trailing behind it, coasted silently past us once more, bubbles popping to the surface in its wake.

"So maybe we're lucky we can't do that anymore."

"Do what?" my father said, his eyes on the Remora.

"Make things happen just by thinking."

"That's just my point. Don't be so sure that we can't. We may not live in Atlantis anymore, but we still live in a world where actions have consequences. And thoughts are actions. You mark my words."

**T**he next morning, with a sandwich, an orange, and two bottles of red wine that my father had sent

along as a gift slung over my shoulder, I arrived at the specified dock an hour earlier than scheduled. Scott's boat was smaller than most of the other vessels nudging together in the calm of the morning. You stepped down, rather than up, into it.

"Disappointed?" Scott called to me from the stern, where he was on his hands and knees arranging green bottles in a deep white tomb of ice.

"Sharks aren't fancy fish," he said. "And it doesn't take a fancy boat to catch them. Hey, Bruce! This is our third."

Bruce, his long body bent down in the small cabin space, craned himself around and acknowledged me with a nod. I recognized him, and the odd pink-checkered golfer's cap he wore, from here and there on the island. Like the boat, he had a slightly downscale look to him—a no-frills guide ready to tackle the relatively simple job of finding some sharks.

With Scott arranging his bottles and Bruce at work in the heart of the boat, I sat, then lay, on the night-cool wood of the dock. Through a space between two planks I could see down into the shallow water below. It was almost as clear as it was out at the sea wall, so that the reef fish pausing and hurrying about on their familiar errands were sharply visible among the bottles and corroding cans. Looking down at that intimate little theater, I soon dozed off, awakening sometime later to the drum of the engine. Phil had arrived, and someone had scooped up my meager gear and placed it in the boat. I got to my feet and, as my first officially useful action, untied the bowline from the dock and jumped aboard.

Bruce took us out past the procession of fishing docks, the unchartered boats all crowded inside them like cows at a feeding trough. As we passed through the narrow inlet, I could see the spot where I normally sat along the sea wall, which looked small and curiously unfamiliar. In increments the landscape beneath us fell away, and soon we were cruising over the impossible, precipitous darkness of the Gulf Stream. Over an all but invisible reef, the men caught their bait fish—seven or eight jack, bright and hard in the crystalline air.



These were tossed into the stern compartment where they banged and flapped for some minutes, the sound clearly audible over the hum of the engine as we made our way out again into deep water.

Twenty minutes later Bruce cut the engine, and we were suddenly alone out in the blue, the boat washing and slapping gently in the waves. A jack was pulled from the stern compartment and whacked abruptly in half, transformed in a moment from a fish into two anonymous chunks of bait. Both pieces were lanced through a giant hook and hurled over the stern. A nylon line fed gradually out, coil after coil, until Bruce at last looped it once around a cleat and passed the remainder to Phil, who was to watch and wait for signs of pressure.

Half an hour passed. I stared at the cleat, envisioning the baited hook drifting in the darkness far below, and suddenly, as if responding to my wish, the loop began to tighten. Phil unlooped the line from the cleat, and he and Scott stood one behind the other in the gently pitching boat, their hands loosely holding the line, which continued to feed sleepily and steadily out.

"On three we'll set the hook," Bruce commanded. "One...two..."

The two men gave a tremendous yank, and immediately the line stiffened decisively. The hook was set. Bruce started up the boat, and Phil and Scott began slowly hauling up our invisible catch. After a while the line no longer pointed down but slanted almost horizontally into the water behind us. I followed it with my eyes until it vanished in the slow rolling waves.

Then, fifty yards behind the stern, a fin appeared and was gone. When it re-emerged, it was close enough so that I could dimly make out the shape of the body beneath it. Even from a distance the shark's color was striking: not the dull, steel gray I had imagined but a warm and vivid brown. Against the sharp blue of the ocean it looked shockingly appropriate, as if selected with deliberate care by an artist. Disappearing and reappearing, the shark made its slow way toward us, drawn without much protest by the steady hauling of the two men. I kept waiting

for it to leap up out of the water and gnash its teeth cinematically, but the closer it got the more it stayed under, until at last it was right up beside us, its head out in the air and its long body trailing down beneath the surface, completely visible.

In the impossibly clear water beside the boat, the animal, about six or seven feet of it, hung almost vertically, its tail maintaining this position with slow, fluid strokes. Forced into this unnatural posture, it seemed to be doing the best it could to maintain some of its dignity. Its broad head sank momentarily, then once again rose above the surface, and I could see where the hook broke through the cream-pale skin of the lower jaw. I found myself tremendously impressed by the eerie nonchalance with which the shark hung there in the water. A huge and alien atmosphere of patience seemed to emanate from it.

"Hook's set good," said Bruce. "Let's see if we can get a loop around him."

In a moment Bruce had formed a lasso, and with a long wooden gaff he gingerly edged it down into the water, toward the shark's tail.

"That's it. Loop's set tight. Let out that other line, we'll take him in to the beach."

With the lines slack, the shark sank down for a moment and moved off, regaining its horizontal position. Bruce pointed the boat toward a small island off in the distance, and suddenly the beautiful casualness of the fish was lost in a blast of noise and white water. Flailing and snapping, it dragged helplessly behind us as we headed for shore.

"That should drown him by the time we get there," Bruce shouted back from the helm.

"Drown him?" I asked no one in particular.

"Yeah," said Scott. "All that rushing water makes it impossible for him to breathe right. Still, he'll probably have some life left in him by the time we get him on land."

Fifteen minutes later, Bruce guided the shallow hull right up onto the beach of a small cove and we all hopped out, Phil and Scott grabbing the hook line as the shark lolled

drunkenly in the water behind. Bruce secured the boat, and all the men took hold of the rope and hauled the great brown body up onto shore.

"Brown shark," Bruce said laced with irony, identifying not the color but the species for us.

It was an apt enough name, slightly foolish in its obviousness. Prone to lie on the sand like a jet taken down from the heavens, the shark glowed with deep, living brown that faded to an equally impressive white beneath. It seemed to me that I had never seen more perfect, a cleaner animal in my life. Its blemishless, velvety skin, its stiff and delicately rounded fins, all conspired to make the animal look as if it had come freshly minted from some incredible machine. It looked like the Remora, I thought, beached on the deck of my father's boat.

While Bruce set to straightening and coiling the line that ran from the hook still caught in the shark's jaw, Phil dug his feet squarely into the sand next to the animal's head and began to give it a series of heavy, horrible, clunking blows with a baseball bat. The shark at first appeared indifferent even to this insult. It continued to look quintessentially, almost sharklike, all precision and purpose and grace. Occasionally a shiver rippled along its length, its tail swung absently back and forth, creating a clean, crescent furrow in the sand.

"Dumb son of a bitch," said Phil. "Can't tell if he even feels anything."

"Are you kidding?" said Scott. "This thing's primitive. He probably thinks he's still out in the water swimming."

Whether or not the shark waited in fact under such an illusion, it was plain enough, after a minute or so, that Phil's efforts were having some effect. The twitches and the movements of the tail died down, and suddenly blood, red and bright and unfamiliar-looking, began to flow from the gills at both sides of the shark's head. The blood soon grew more plentiful, and Phil had to step back to avoid having it drench his white deck sneakers.

After all the long commotion of the morning, the four of us stood silently around the body of the shark, which though now quite obvious



ld still seemed all motion and pur-  
e, like an arrow pointing off to a  
lm of color and life and beauty—a  
realm that we ourselves  
would never find or enter.

an Atlantean times, wrote Rudolf  
iner, the air was denser than it is  
v. The water, meanwhile, was  
inner, and as a result the At-  
teans, who received their knowl-  
e about the world clairvoyantly  
m spiritual sources, were able to  
ve about the earth and exploit its  
ret forces in ways very different  
m those that are known today.  
e Atlanteans understood the forces  
nature so well that they formed a  
d of partnership with them. The  
hips that glided through the thick  
antean air were powered by life-  
rgy extracted from plant seeds; the  
antean cities resembled huge,  
wing gardens, with houses built  
m the interwoven branches of  
es. It was only when the At-  
teans grew indulgent and started  
using the formidable energies that  
I been bequeathed to them that  
gs started to go wrong. Ultimate-  
Atlantis sank, and the clairvoyant  
magically energized world they  
known hardened into the stub-  
n and unyielding one we know to-  
—a world where machines run on  
oline and the air is disappointingly  
n and objects do not yield easily  
instantly to human desires.

My father didn't find Atlantis.  
ne months after our stay on Bimi-  
hat summer, he returned to the  
nd with a crew of sober and fully  
shed geologists, who extracted a  
es of corings from the limestone  
cks of the great white Road. Ex-  
ned microscopically, these deliv-  
l the news that the Road was a  
pletely natural formation, down  
ch no lost civilizations, naked or  
thed, had ever wandered or  
iced. All the images of naked  
ers hovering and darting about  
ve it, all the Remora's sweeping  
age, were thus rendered useless,  
e for their potential interest to fu-  
cultural historians.

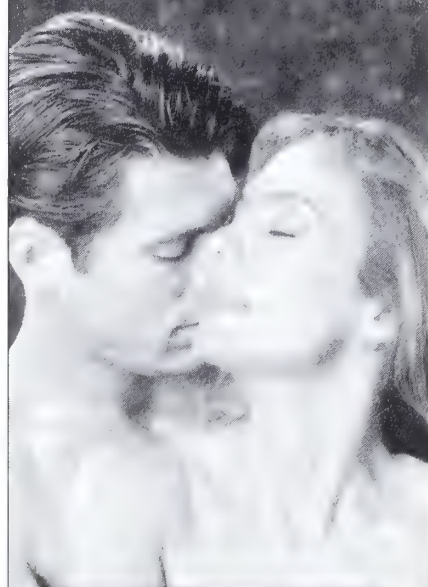
True to his words to me on the  
t that day, my father took this  
vs in stride. Goose chases, he  
ntained, were inevitable when

one spent one's time challenging sci-  
entific orthodoxy. The best thing to  
do, when one found oneself engaged  
in one, was to accept the fact with-  
out struggle and move on. In any  
case, it was not as if Atlantis itself  
was rendered obsolete just because  
the Road had lost its Atlantean  
pedigree. Indeed, no sooner was it  
eliminated as a possible proof of the  
lost continent's existence than other  
forms of evidence began flooding in  
to take its place. Although he never  
released his film about it, my father  
also never abandoned his conviction  
that Atlantis was a reality. As for  
myself, I wasn't so sure. For even if  
Atlantis had indeed existed, who  
was to say it would come back just  
because my father and others so des-  
perately and urgently wanted it to?  
Sometimes, it seemed to me, things  
could disappear completely. And  
when that happened, all the positive  
thinking in the world wouldn't bring  
them back again. ■

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**Stripes on the Flag.** The flag of Israel has it that the two stripes on the flag of Israel, above and below the star of David, represent the Nile and the Euphrates River, respectively, and signify Israel's expansionist desire, to form an "empire" that would supposedly reach from Cairo to Baghdad. But that has no basis in fact, of course. Nowhere in any documents of the Jewish state, in any statement by even the most "radical" spokesman can reference to anything like that be found.

**Israel's Borders.** "Palestine," part of the Ottoman Empire before World War I, came under British mandate after that war. The Golan Heights were part of Palestine. Israel's current borders are the result of the 1948

War of Independence, in which six Arab armies invaded the new-born state, but were utterly defeated, and the 1967 Six-Day War, in which those same armies once again invaded Israel. In that war, Israel conquered the Gaza Strip, the vast Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights. And Israel also repossessed the provinces of Judea Samaria, (the "West Bank"), and the eastern part of Jerusalem, which had been occupied by the Jordanians nineteen years earlier, when they invaded

the just new-born Jewish state. In order to achieve peace with Egypt, Israel returned to it all of the Sinai. Israel is and has always been prepared to grant full autonomy to the Arabs living in Judea Samaria. It is clear to all knowledgeable in military matters that, for immutable strategic reason, Israel cannot for any foreseeable future abandon or yield military control of Judea Samaria (the "West Bank") and of the Golan Heights.

**The Myth of Greater Israel.** Israel is one of the smallest countries in the world. Most people don't realize how small it really is. One wonders whether those who keep talking about "Greater Israel" wish to pressure Israel to divest itself of a big chunk of its territory: are aware of it. A look at the map is revealing. Including the "West Bank," the Gaza



Strip and the Golan Heights, the entire area of the country is barely over 10,000 square miles. France is twenty times as large as Israel. California fifteen times as large, Syria about seven times as large, and "tiny" Ecuador ten times as large. Israel is so small that its area is less than half the size of San Bernardino County, California: if it were dropped into Lake Michigan it would disappear from sight without a trace. The Arab counties in contrast are huge—they occupy twice the area of the United States. Greater Israel, indeed!

It is clear that the concept of "Greater Israel," lacks any validity and has no basis in fact. To apply such a concept to a country as small as Israel would almost seem a mockery. Obviously, Israel has no territorial ambitions. All it wants is to live in peace within secure and defensible borders, just as any other country and as required under U.N. Resolution No. 242. But it seems that the size of Israel, whether "greater" or "lesser" is not at all the concern of Israel's implacable Arab enemies. The very existence of Israel, of a Jewish state in their midst of whatever size, is unacceptable to the Arabs. And unless that mindset changes, not until the Arab states have become democracies and have come to full acceptance of Israel, are willing to make true peace with it, and are prepared to establish normal and friendly relations with Israel can any possible territorial adjustment be considered. As it looks right now, that may still take some time.

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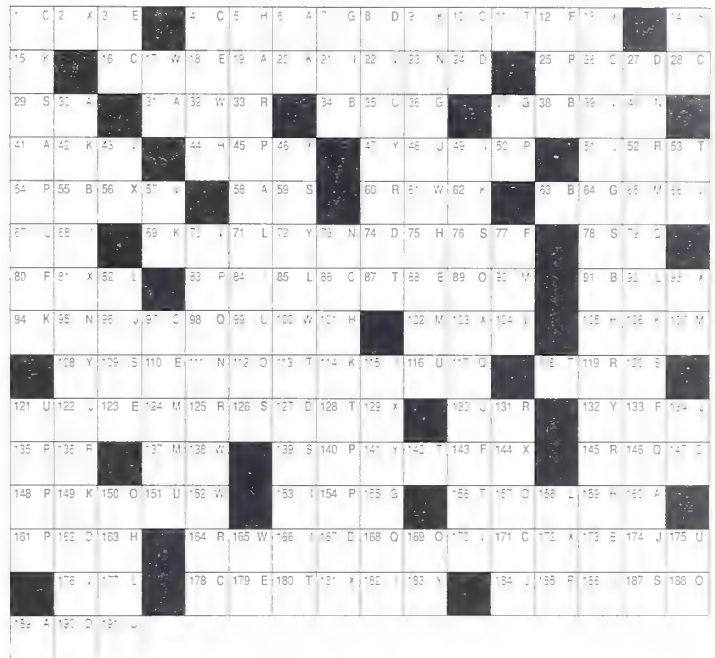
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# DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 169

By Thomas H. Middleton

The diagram, when filled in, will contain a quotation from a published work. The numbered squares in the diagram correspond to the numbered blanks under the WORDS. The WORDS form an acrostic: the first letter of each spells the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken. The letter in the upper right-hand corner of each square indicates the WORD containing the letter to be entered in that square. Contest rules and the solution to last month's puzzle appear on page 79.



## CLUES

## WORDS

A. Takes a respite from a journey (2 wds.)

160 55 6 19 30 150  
31 41

B. Natural objects assumed as emblems of a clan

55 173 34 35 91 63

C. Tending to disturb

147 4 16 97 171 1 86 178  
25

D. Torment

27 190 167 8 127 24 74

E. Take away

123 179 18 110 88 3

F. "Cheers," e.g.

133 12 143 77 80

G. Dodge; quibble

155 37 64 7 36

H. Bested; firmly twisted yarn

44 75 5 101 105 159 163

I. Explain

180 182 21 49 115 68 166 153  
84

J. With appropriate precision

174 184 122 96 51 134

K. Shoot the breeze (3 wds.)

9 106 62 69 114 149 42 15  
94 20

L. Stuffed

92 158 67 71 177 82 55

M. Malleable metallic element allied to iron and cobalt

102 137 65 124 107 90

N. Foaming

73 23 111 95 40

O. Agreement

112 169 89 162 150 26 157 10  
188

P. Italian statesman and writer (1469-1527, *Il Principe*)

83 161 148 154 54 45 185 50  
140 135 25

Q. Bound to undergo (2 wds.)

168 117 79 146 98

R. 14th-cent. B.C. queen of Egypt

119 125 131 136 33 145 164 60  
52

S. Paul urges the Philippians to think on "whatsoever things are at \_\_\_\_\_" (2 wds., Philippians 4:8)

139 78 59 120 109 29 76 14  
187 126

T. Faulty muscular or glandular coordination

11 53 142 180 156 118 128 113  
57

U. Bootleg booze

121 116 130 151 175 35 99 48

V. Small trees, genus *Viburnum*

170 66 39 70 104 43 22 176  
57

W. Dick, eye, flatfoot

152 17 165 138 61 100

X. Large oboe (2 wds.)

144 70 40 80

Y. Weak

103 181 13  
183



# PUZZLE

## Projec-Tiles

By Richard E. Maltby Jr.

**C**ertain words (one foreign!) are to be broken up into "tiles" of one or two letters. For example, SHOE might be broken up as S H O E, SH O E, S H O E, S H O E, or SH O E. Each tile can then be "projected" into the diagram according to the grid co-ordinates. Each tile appears once among the Clue answers. The completed diagram will be a crossword of unclued words, common except for AU Down. (Solvers wanting an extra challenge can try to solve the puzzle using only the Clues.) Across and Down answers, one per row and column, and similarly "tiled," will help reveal the correct tiling. These answers include one proper noun. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 79.

1. Bowler has her at Commencement—"has" in the Biblical sense (4) IN, JS, IX
2. Fuzzy with disheartening anger (4) KU, IO
3. Square tack (4) CQ, LV, BP
4. Love causes irritated back (4) CV, BU, AO
5. Spanish queen: check one (5) AT, DU, HO
6. Candy holding a... a doll's words (5) CX, JX, FM, LR
7. Musical pieces that sound saccharine (5) FP, BQ, GW
8. Public spectacle taken in by ear (5) BM, JT, AR
9. Unit of militia raised for the Crown (5) GT, DS, KO
10. Lightweight bouncer is out of bounds (5) CR, CW, KT, BV
11. Least sound sausage (5) BR, FN, AX
12. Just on opening, maple leaves shake three times more (6) U, O, W
13. Fruit makes ring on stove (6) BX, GS, DM
14. Hand-holder has breather after college (6) AM, JO, EO
15. When the last leaves, have chasers (6) HQ, BW, CT
16. When one faces others, hallelujah! (6) FR, BO, JM
17. Bridge round masseur (6) KW, CO, LW, KR
18. Fooling around in France, this is bound to be returned (6) U, O, W
19. Mind buster of 4 (6) JS, IX, FM, LR
20. "Return of the Menace" offended (6) EX, KP, IV, GO, LQ
21. Lessen shot glasses (6) FX, LM, KS, JQ
22. Files down halfway, rises anew (7) GP, IQ, EV, LX
23. Ability to take lead formed at dorms (7) DN, GV, BS, HN
24. Pontiac changes heading (7) FU, IM, HV, AQ, ET
25. Graverobbing soul, high-flying (8) IR, EP, LU, JN, CS
26. Spend the summer months (four) in country property (8) CM, IP, HU, DQ, FO
27. First row center, leaving unsettled (8) GR, HT, GM, JP
28. Don't start disrobing, taking drugs (8) AP, AW, KN, DV, JV
29. Cyclers in Rent, tossing back coke (8) HP, HW, BN, GX, LN
30. Summoned, went off again like a knight? (9) IS, GU, U, O, W
31. Stone-layers' first Dodge (9) EU, AV, LS, FT, HX, CP
32. Love me during trade measure (9) EN, GN, KX, DT, DR, ES
33. Natural leather's free (10) U, O, W

	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
A												
B												
C												
D												
E												
F												
G												
H												
I												
J												
K												
L												

34. Go to bed in sea gone dark (9) KQ, HS, ER, JU, EM, FQ, AN
35. Counting on a call I cut out (11) AS, KV, DP, KM, FV, HM

### ACROSS

- A. Send roses—time to get beyond more shooting (6)  
AO, AQ, AT, AX
- B. Roar wildly around, ending in dead heat (5) BN, BS, BX
- C. Kinds of shirt pins in golf (4) CN, CT
- D. Defile saint? (5) DN, DS, DV
- E. Proper words for those in the habit of mostly getting taken in (5) EM, EP, ET, EX
- F. Select it any which way—it depends on the male! (8)  
FO, FP, FV, FW, FX
- G. Party with Kennedy and get cared for (5) GP, GW, GX
- H. Seeing through scalped fictional Indian (2,2) HM, HP
- I. Turning profits gets church in stink (6) IP, IU, IV, IW, IX
- J. Foreign leader brings Frost back (4) JM, JN, JU
- K. Rule for sound precipitative action? (4) KO, KP, KT
- L. First piece of Film Guide (6) LP, LS, LT, LX

### DOWN

- M. Shuffling, anteing gets you blue (7) DM, EM, GM, KM, LM
- N. Comic roasts ball players (6) BN, DN, FN, LN
- O. Crying about each essay (5) FO, HO, IO
- P. Useful cat affects us more (6) CP, EP, FP, JP
- Q. Bejeweled and bored? (5) CQ, DQ, EQ, LQ
- R. They want a hand, or so we figured (6) BR, CR, KR, LR
- S. Stock cooking shears (6) CS, HS, IS, KS
- T. Dieter maniacally got even again (6) AT, GT, JT, LT
- U. Cons in full prisons: evil (6) CU, DU, KU, LU
- V. Rank tongue-lashing (6) AV, GV, HV, IV, JV
- W. Bird on the back end of the back end (4) GW, HW
- X. M-Mesta, M-Merman, a bit of that! (7) AX, JX, KX, LX

**Contest Rules:** Send a self-addressed manila envelope with name and address to "Projec-Tiles," *Harpers Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. Include a return address. Please to have a return address on the mailing label. Entries must be received by January 8. Senders will be notified by mail. The winner will receive one year subscriptions to *Harpers Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the March issue. Winners of the November 1996 puzzle, "Dedicated Dodecahedron III," are Mike Miller, New York, New York; Vicki Spellman, Aurora, Illinois; and Jeffrey R. Folts, Hatfield, Massachusetts.



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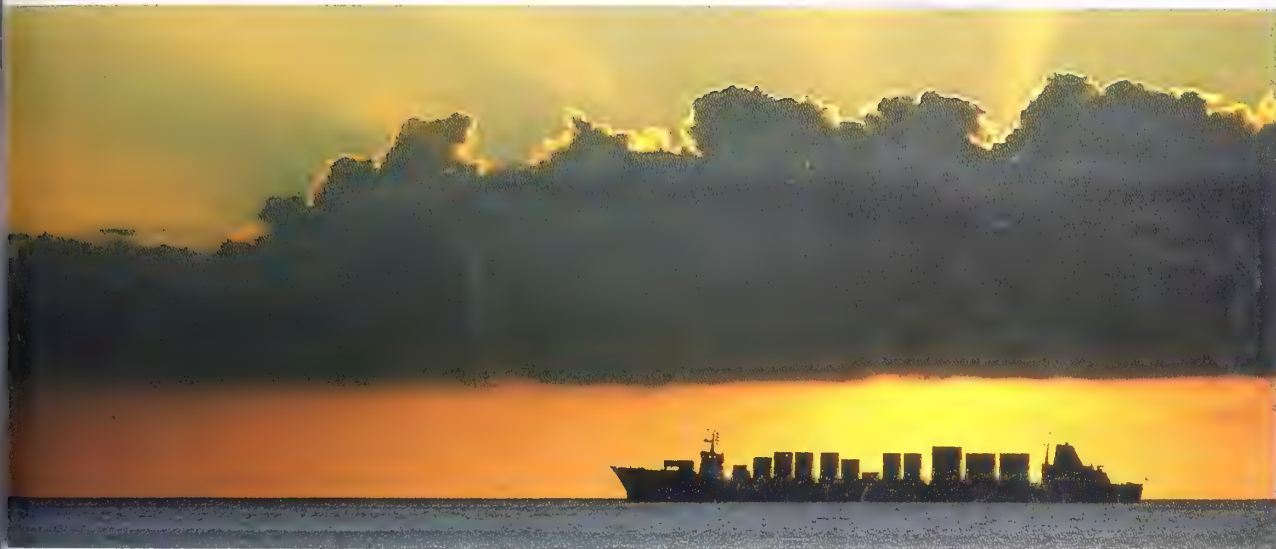
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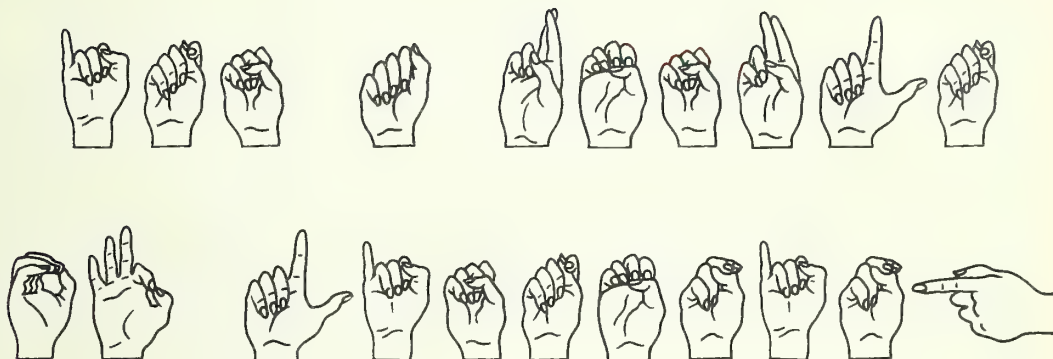




*Really Daniel L-O-V-E-S her Saturn.*



“



”



When folks ask Holly

what kind of car

she has, spelling out

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long. So she made up

her own sign language

symbol for it. (Not to

be confused with the

symbol for a U-turn.)

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# LETTERS

## The Conundrum of Creation

As a contemporary of geologist Kurt Wise at Harvard, I read Jack Hitt's insightful commentary on the resurgence of creationism, "On Earth as It Is in Heaven" [November 1996], with great interest. Science is essentially curiosity-driven, and the apparatus of hypothesis, experiment, and observation is meant to protect us from arriving at a given conclusion if the truth lies elsewhere. Observations that contradict the existing wisdom often lead toward, not away from, the truth, and such nonintuitive discoveries as the orbit of the earth around the sun, quantum theory, and the existence of DNA could not have been made any other way. "Scientific creationism," of course, is the inverse of science, proceeding from a foregone conclusion to seek observations that support it and to reject observations that do not.

Wise's graduate department included faculty who were world-famous for their work on the age and history of the earth; Wise avoided their courses and seminars, preferring instead to isolate himself from any scientist who challenged his beliefs. At his dissertation defense, I watched him present a legitimate reevaluation of the criteria by which time ranges are assigned to various fossil groups. But in doing so he assiduously avoided the issue of the actual ages of the fossils. He knew perfectly well that tens of thousands of radiometric-age determinations had been published, any one of which would have been enough to disprove the existence of a

young earth, so in preparing his thesis he chose to ignore them.

Public acceptance of Wise's ideas perpetuates a gross misunderstanding of the role and methodology of science, and perpetuates as well the dangerous misconception that science is the enemy of religion. Once the abandonment of reason and the embrace of superstition led us into the Dark Ages. It is vital that we let "scientists" such as Wise lead us down that road again.

Andrew Macfarlane  
Miami

Jack Hitt's analysis of the "scientific creationism" issue would have been better served by showing less of what's happening in lonely mountain caves and small denominational colleges, and more of what's happening in our nation's public schools. Since November 1995, five state legislatures have considered anti-evolution laws, six state party platforms have called for the teaching of creationism, and two state school boards have adopted anti-evolution curricula. The courts have thus far found unconstitutional to ban the teaching of evolution and force creationism on our children, but teachers are being urged to do so anyway by parents claiming that their children have a "right" to be protected from knowledge of modern science. In Kentucky a school superintendent went so far as to order that textbook pages be glued together because a discussion of the Big Bang theory did not include Genesis's account of creation as well.

Hitt correctly identifies scientific creationism's greatest flaw: no matter the question asked, the answer is always predetermined by the religious beliefs of the "scientist." It was

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helpful for Hitt to point out that each of creation science amounts to "gold mines." But some of his comments may mislead readers about evolution's contribution to our store of knowledge. For example, evolutionary scientists *have* explained how animal[s] evolve an eye or a wing," showing how the forelimbs of a common ancestor were modified in different ways to become birds' wings, bats' wings, and the forelegs of various other animals.

Surely the readers of *Harper's Magazine* don't want their children learning that, as Wise claims, "flood tectonic activity heated up the ocean atmosphere to thirty degrees celsius" (temperature lethal to much marine life), or that, as creation scientist John Woodmorappe suggests, Noah's Ark might have been illuminated by fireflies! They need to know the truth, and so do their parents.

Aileen Matsumura  
National Center for Science  
Education  
Berkeley, Calif.

The end of Jack Hitt's essay neatly encapsulates the fear at the heart of the anti-evolution agenda. Longing for an existence imbued with "meaning" from without, for reassurance of order from above, for a tidy explanation for why we are what we are and where we are going hints at the same irrational fear that makes a child seek the attention, love, and approval of his or her parents and occupy the center of *their* universe.

Darwin, a devout man, viewed his book *On the Origin of Species* as "one long argument" for the idea of "descent with modification"—the historical, genealogical relationship of organisms. This is a view that many religious people have found perfectly compatible with their faith because kinship with other organisms magnifies, not diminishes, the glory of their God.

But the creationist agenda means more than narcissism. Besides its anti-intellectualism and alarming goal of legislating its particular received truth, the more pernicious subtexts of this agenda include a denial of personal responsibility and the staunch defense of a status quo in

which everyone knows his place—both of which inhere to an ideology built on the notion of divine order.

In the final paragraph of *Origin*, Darwin points out that "there is grandeur in this view of life . . ."; I would add that there is also *humility* in this view of life, a lesson that humankind, perhaps fundamentalist zealots especially, could stand to learn.

Jim Costa  
Cullowhee, N.C.

Pity Jack Hitt chose only to investigate and write about the orthodox, those who let their assumptions dictate their science. I speak, of course, of both the young-earth creationists, who assume the earth to be far younger than it apparently is, and evolutionary theorists, who assume, evidence to the contrary, that macroevolution, natural selection, and random mutations have given rise to the incredible complexity and sublime order that surrounds and includes us.

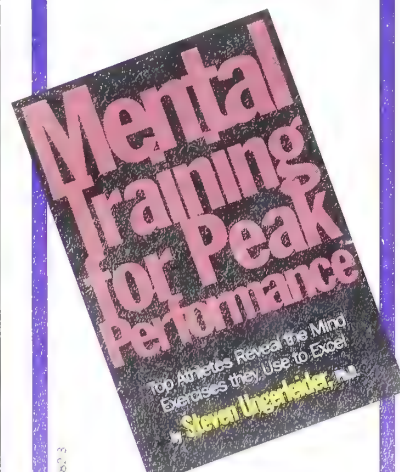
Like the young-earthers, evolutionists acknowledge only what scientific evidence fits their theory, and we should not assume that the ground they stand on is any more solid. Stephen Jay Gould has said that natural selection and random mutation may no longer be viable as key elements of evolutionary theory. Colin Patterson, senior paleontologist for the British Museum, is oft quoted as saying that after twenty years of studying evolution, he could not list a single thing that he knew to be true about it. Physicist Roger Penrose has said that the chance of an ordered universe happening at random is 10 to the 10 to the 30th against—a number so large that if you programmed a computer to write a million zeros per second, it would take a million times the age of the universe just to write the number down.

Ultimately, one has to wonder how scientists who assume the profound presence of patterns in nature in order to practice their very art can also assume that those patterns developed randomly, from nothingness. Patterns imply intelligence, and an ordered creation implies an orderer.

Andy Fletcher  
Colorado Springs



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## Going to the Chapel?

As Fenton Johnson pointed out in his essay "Wedded to an Illusion" [November 1996], gays and lesbians are not necessarily helping themselves by insisting that the law recognize their right to marry. For years now, people have known that the form of a relationship should be determined only by those in the relationship and that many forms are possible. Congress's Defense of Marriage Act, which was signed by President Clinton last September, attempts to bring back the days when everybody knew 1) what marriage was and 2) that it was a good thing. It only succeeds in confirming that those days are gone.

Do gays have a right to marry? As much right as anybody. But although legalized gay marriage may be the shortest route to the economic benefits that government confers on straight marriages, gays should beware the lure of "legitimizing," "confirming," or "committing to" their relationships via an institution that traditionally doesn't work too well. We should also ask whether the state has any legitimate interest in punishing or rewarding citizens for the way they manage their personal lives.

The state's basis for rewarding marriage is, ostensibly, the need for children to be protected from abandonment. Yet the protection offered children by the legal and ecclesiastical status of marriage is already somewhat attenuated, and I suspect that the real reason behind the state's preference for heterosexuality is the simple fact that heterosexuality is widespread among voters and tends, over time, to generate new taxpayers.

Richard Crowder  
Glen Allen, Va.

Like many of my feminist and queer friends, and like Fenton Johnson, I have watched with mixed emotion the impending state sanction of a lesbian bond in Hawaii. As a heterosexual feminist, I am eager to see the institution of marriage—the cornerstone of patriarchy—wither away and be replaced by the voluntary commitments and improvised families Johnson applauds. As a realist and social egalitarian, though, I know that mar-

riage isn't going to disappear anytime soon. And every citizen must therefore have access to its benefits.

But whereas my ambivalence is strategic, Johnson's is sentimental. He seems nostalgic for the idea of marriage as only someone forbidden it can be, and that personal attachment shows up in his ill-considered policy recommendation: that government confer "rewards," in the form of tax breaks, adoption privileges, and the like, on "behavior that contributes to social stability."

Contingent on heterosexual marriage or not, such benefits would be carrots to long-term partnership, the concomitant sticks of which are efforts to make divorce more difficult. Johnson's idea, like right-wing efforts and the scores of stern marriage manuals by the conservative Christians who promote them, implies that such commitment is so difficult to achieve that it requires vigilance and prizes for its maintenance and painful deterrents to its dissolution.

Marriage and comparable couplings commonly begin with love and sex, as Johnson says. But although they endure in part because of these things, they are cemented equally, if not more so, by improved financial security, joint property, history, habit, children, in-laws, mutual friends, the declining sexual marketability of the partners, and AIDS. All of these are powerful incentives to getting and staying together—indeed, most people eventually do both. But they also tempt us toward the status quo that coupledness has always promoted.

At this point, the state's only "interest" in marriage is to regulate sexuality, and the ham-handed Defense of Marriage Act reveals the anachronistic and inherently discriminatory nature of that endeavor. Government should distribute social welfare benefits, such as affordable health care and help for parents, to all individuals, neither rewarding any particular kind of consensual relationship nor punishing deviance from it. Hawaii governor Ben Cayetano is right: the state should get out of the marriage business altogether.

Judith Levine  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

## A Mine Is a Terrible Thing to Waste

Edwin Dobb should be commended for "Pennies from Hell," his exhaustive examination of Montana copper mining in the October 1996 issue. Although I might quibble with the title, Dobb illuminates the "schizophrenic attitude" our nation has adopted toward the extractive industries when he writes that "it is so transparently hypocritical not to admit [our] indebtedness."

Each American consumes 40,000 pounds of new minerals a year, yet as a nation we seem unwilling to face the consequences of this voracious appetite. Butte's Berkeley Pit satisfied that appetite with more than 13 billion pounds of copper in nearly a hundred years of operation. Much of this copper was transformed into the wire through which electricity is now conducted from coast to coast.

The Berkeley Pit is an example of yesterday's technology. Today, state and federal laws protect the environment, and mining companies must comply with more than the dozen federal laws and regulations covering their operations. Moreover, it is important to note that mining has touched less than one-quarter of one percent of all the land in the United States.

Members of the National Mining Association have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to protect the environment and reclaim mined lands. Mining strives to operate in an environmentally sensitive manner, protecting wildlife, reclaiming abandoned mine sites, and using new technologies to enhance the environment.

As we have communicated to President Clinton, it takes a mine to build that bridge to the twenty-first century of which he is so fond. Without mining you cannot build a bridge, literally or figuratively, anywhere. The question is whether we will produce the minerals for that bridge in the United States, with the attendant economic benefits, or import them from abroad.

Richard L. Lawson  
President,

National Mining Association  
Washington, D.C.



## Food for Thought

I write in response to "Fine Dining's Biggest Threat" in the Readings section of your December 1996 issue, in which I was wrongly placed among those *New York Times* restaurant critics who do not take price into consideration when making evaluations.

Yes, I do. So did my predecessor, John Canaday. The legend accompanying my reviews stated that ratings reflected my reaction to food and service *in relation to price*. This was explained months ago on Page Six of the *New York Post*, and I'm surprised *Harper's* would waste space on something that is both trivial and old news.

Aimi Sheraton  
New York City

## Wallace in Wonderland?

We enjoyed Richard Wallace's "Malice in Wonderland" in the November 1996 Readings. It soon became clear to us, however, that the author was trying to unburden himself. He seemed as obsessed with anagrams as was Lewis Carroll himself, and sure enough, the first paragraph of his article contains a grisly confession.

Rearranging the letters of:

This is my story of Jack the Ripper, the man behind Britain's worst unsolved murders. It is a story that points to the unlikeliest of suspects: a man who wrote children's stories. That man is Charles Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, author of such beloved books as *Alice in Wonderland*.

we arrive at:

The truth is this: I, Richard Wallace, stabbed and killed a muted Nicole Brown in cold blood, severing her throat with my trusty shiv's strokes. I set up Orenthal James Simpson, who is utterly innocent of this murder. P.S. I also wrote Shakespeare's sonnets, and a lot of Francis Bacon's works too.

Painfully obvious once you spot it, sn't it? Off with his head!

Francis Heaney      Guy Jacobson  
New York City      Bridgewater, N.J.

## Editors' Note:

Due to a printer's error, a section of the January issue appeared on the wrong paper stock. We regret any puzzlement this may have caused our readers.

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sport-utility vehicles, besting the Blazer on turning stability and conquering the Grand Cherokee on gas mileage. So this time, we set our sights on a brand-new challenge: beating the Ford Explorer and its standard V6 on zero-to-sixty acceleration. Now at first glance, our 2.5-liter boxer engine may have appeared to be no match for

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# NOTEBOOK

Economic correctness

By Lewis H. Lapham

*What I want to see above all is that this remains a country where someone can always get rich.*

—Ronald Reagan

When the Republican majorities in Congress began busying themselves in early December with preliminary investigations of the Lippo Group, the Indonesian cartel said to have supplied extravagant gifts of cash to last year's presidential campaign, the first newspaper reports seemed as straightforward as an old Charlie Chan movie—cunning oriental businessmen lure rich but foolish American tourist into crooked mah-jongg game in a waterfront opium den. The papers didn't back for details—President Clinton's exchange of notes and visits with Mochar Riady, the mysterious comings and goings of John Huang, "disproportionate influence" brought to bear on the making of American foreign policy, large campaign contributions abruptly returned by the Democratic National Committee—and for a few days it looked as if the story was likely to bloom into big news.

But the moral lesson apparently was harder to draw than the headlines implied, and before the month was out I was receiving telephone calls from nervous Washington correspondents in search of experts whom they could consult on the finer points of foreign trade. Did I know anybody reliable on Wall Street, and what was the name of Disney's man who understood the market in offshore bribes? If Air France could hire

Senator Dole to sell weekend flights to Paris, what prevented the Lippo Group from hiring President Clinton to sell Coca-Cola in Vietnam? If the global economy was nothing other than a gigantic shopping mall and if an Indonesian billionaire wished to buy an American president instead of an American airplane or an American truck, why make the transaction unpleasant or unnecessarily difficult?

The confusion was both technical and philosophical, and the range of questions suggested that the senior officers of the national news media lacked a doctrine of economic correctness. They knew that under the rules of the new economic world order the value of national sovereignty had been much reduced—becoming roughly equivalent to that of the picturesque backgrounds in an important movie or a trendy restaurant—and they understood that the Japanese already owned most of the Hollywood movie studios, that Rupert Murdoch owned the *New York Post* and Fox News, and that Hachette, a French publishing syndicate, had acquired the franchise on John F. Kennedy Jr., the best of America's political brand names. But if most of what was worth buying in the American auction already had been sold to foreign bidders, on what text could they construct indignant sermons about the purchase of an already discounted President for a price well below that of an Alaskan forest?

Their most pressing questions I re-

ferred to a friend who trades international currencies for Salomon Brothers, but then it occurred to me to make note of the words and phrases that lately have come to express the trend of the times. The meanings flutter in the prevailing wind of opinion like telltales fixed to the mast of a sailboat, and over the course of the last two or three years the definitions appeared to have shifted quite a few compass points to the right. The device of an alphabetical list I borrowed from Gustave Flaubert, who compiled his *Dictionary of Accepted Ideas* during the latter half of the nineteenth century and who was thoughtful enough to indicate preferred tones of voice as well as to supply suggestions for apt quotation and supplemental phrase.

## ACCOUNTANTS

The unacknowledged legislators of the world.

## ARISTOTLE

The first capitalist. He defined slaves as "animated tools" and classified them among the animals and plants.

## AWE

Proper show of respect when addressing persons blessed with annual incomes in excess of \$500,000. (See FREEDOM.)

## BUREAUCRATS

Not to be scoffed at. They're the people who write the tax exemptions. "What else is a banker or a



businessman if not an enlightened bureaucrat."

#### CAMMINGTON PRIZES

Political-financial products; the equivalents of junk bonds.

#### CITIZENRY

Wealth incarnate. The lives of the saints.

#### CEOS

Heroes of our time. Their decisive habit of mind allows them to order the dismissal of 40,000 superfluous workers without a moment's thought or delay. Refer to them as champions of the people.

#### CHARITY

The road to hell.

#### CHINA

Land of boundless opportunity. Every two weeks another 4,000 Chinese become millionaires.

#### CIA

Should be privatized. (See YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK.)

#### CONSERVATIVE

Ask grandly, "When was America anything other than a conservative country?"

#### CORPORATION, TRANSNATIONAL

Dominant institution of the late twentieth century, comparable to the medieval Church or the Roman legions in the first century A.D. Because it exists in the realm of pure abstraction (like money and the Holy Ghost), it can give birth to its own parents.

#### CORRUPTION

Sign of a mature society. The practice of taking bribes teaches the lesson of tolerance.

#### CULTURE

Overrated. Quote Winston Churchill, "Culture is the glittering scum that floats on the river of production."

#### DEMOCRACY

Outworn system of government, unequal to the tasks of the twenty-first century. A luxury that no first-rate nation can continue to afford. Quote John Adams, "There never was a democracy that did not commit suicide."

#### DOGS

Inspire trust.

#### DRUG TRADE

Must be stopped.

#### ELECTORATE, THE AMERICAN

Suffers from apathy. Compare the affliction to Dutch elm disease, "blighting the forests of freedom."

#### ETHICS

Local or regional customs, like Basque folk songs or Bolivian hats. Sold at steep discounts in the global economy.

#### FAMILY VALUES

Sacrosanct. Must be protected at all costs. Avoid attempting to define the phrase. Also describes the Mafia.

#### FASCISM

A much happier system of government than generally supposed. Hitler gave it a bad name.

#### FREEDOM

Synonymous with an income of \$500,000 a year. (See AWE.)

#### FREE MARKET

The few people who still question its omniscience are the kind of people who belong to weird religious sects.

#### FUR COAT

Symbol of democracy. (See McDONALD'S.)

#### FUTURE, THE

Under the management of the World Trade Organization in Geneva. The resident clerks envision higher walls, better waste-disposal systems, more prisons.

#### GENEROSITY

Reckless impulse. Compare it to drunk driving.

#### GLOBAL ECONOMY

Engineered by wise financiers to guarantee the happiness of mankind. The mechanism is very expensive and very delicate, requiring the participation of investors instead of citizens.

#### GRIED

Tasteless word. Substitute "husbandry" or "prudence."

#### HAMILTON, ALEXANDER

Recognized at long last as the true father of the country. Praise him without stint.

Twenty years ago he was most known for having been killed in a duel. His new place in the pantheon of American demigods is founded on his prescience. Well ahead of his time, he understood the importance of banks and child labor. On the latter point, you may quote him directly: "Women and children are rendered more useful, and the latter more early useful, by manufacturing establishments than they would otherwise be."

#### HISTORY

Anything that appears on television. Say, "In Ken Burns we have found our Macaulay and our Gibbon."

#### IDEALISM

Dangerous substance. If left standing too long at room temperature on a library table, idealism congeals into ideology, which breeds totalitarianism and puritanical reigns of virtue. Robespierre was an idealist. So was Lenin.

#### INDIVIDUALISM

Priceless commodity.

#### KURDS

Always betrayed.

#### LEADERS

All, alas, defunct. Gone with the buffalo that once ennobled the Great Plains.

#### LIBERAL

Synonym for anything weak, soft, effeminate, obsolete, or un-American. Always pronounced with an intonation of scorn.

Four years ago the rules of rhetorical decency obliged President Bush to mask the insult with a euphemism—"the L word." The Democratic campaign could afford to speak more plainly. "The country in the meantime had learned to properly evaluate the ruinous cost of good intentions."

#### LITERATURE

Decorative art; belongs to the same category of ornament as throw pillows and lawn sculpture.

#### MCDONALD'S

Symbol of democracy. (See FUR COAT.)

#### MONEY

The light of the world and the



mandate of Heaven. Impossible to  
y enough in its favor.

#### MONOPOLY

Glorious manifestation of human  
genuity. The source of all our  
essings. Why the department  
ores never run out of Italian suits  
d French cologne.

#### MULTICULTURALISM

The department stores understand  
better than the universities.

#### NATIONALISM

Last refuge of small and impover-  
ied countries without a well-devel-  
ed tourist trade. Instead of tennis  
urts and boat marinas they have  
eet riots and torn flags.

#### TRAGEDY

In short supply. Driven off the mar-  
t during the last two years by the 70  
cent rise of the Dow Jones Indus-  
al Average. When Dole asked after  
whereabouts during the final, des-  
rate week of last November's presi-  
ntial campaign, he was informed by  
e polls that it was where it was sup-  
sed to be—stored safely in the attic  
th the Bob Dylan records.

#### REALITY

Expensive pastime, like golf or  
ng gliding. Once enjoyed by farm-  
s and populists; now pursued most-  
by people who can afford their  
n airplanes.

#### THE WORLD

By-products of the global econo-  
y. They perform a necessary ser-  
ce, reminding people more fortu-  
ately placed that the advancement  
learning does not come cheap,  
at civilization entails sacrifice.

In the early months of the Clin-  
n Administration it was thought  
at the government might do some-  
ing on behalf of the poor. But that  
is before the poor were redefined  
object lessons and cautionary  
es. To make them rich would de-  
oy their purpose.

#### OFFENSE

Never indecent or obscene.

#### LEGISLATION

Must be punished and made ex-  
mples of, if necessary by the occa-  
sional bombing of a camel caravan  
mewhere in Libya or Iraq, if for no

other reason than to show bullies in  
Phoenix and New Orleans that  
nothing good can come from playing  
with explosives.

#### RUSSIAN

They brought ruin on themselves  
because for seventy-four years they  
forgot that money is God.

#### SELF-INTEREST

Always preceded by "enlight-  
ened." Worthy cause. The Puritan  
forefathers believed that God's grace  
revealed itself as property.

#### SMITH, ADAM

Great man. Praise him without  
stint. The eighteenth-century avatar  
of Bill Gates.

#### SUPERFLUOUS

Word applied to people, never to  
hotels or automobiles.

#### TECHNOLOGY

Indispensable. Hard to remember  
how one got along without it.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT

Necessary check on inflation.

#### UNITED NATIONS

Victorian boarding school at  
which the United States has accept-  
ed the post of headmaster.

#### UTOPIA

Once imagined as a place, or at  
least as a possible destination. Now  
understood as a state of mind and an  
escape from stress, as near at hand as  
a prescription for Prozac or the next  
plane to Florida.

#### VIRTUE

Best practiced by the poor, who  
have more need of it.

#### WARS

The only important ones involve  
large corporations, not nation-states.

#### WASHINGTON COLUMNISTS

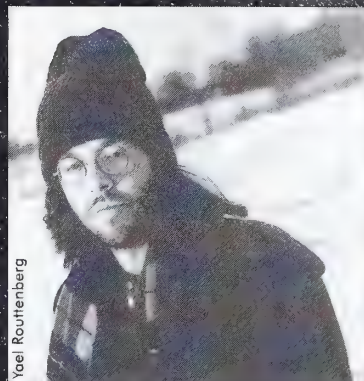
None of them believe what they  
write. They drive expensive cars and  
subsist on shiitake mushrooms.

#### YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

Should be privatized. (See CIA.)

#### ZAIRE

Corrupt country in Africa. Proves  
the futility of giving money to people  
who don't understand it. Once fa-  
mous for elephants.



David Foster Wallace

## David Foster Wallace

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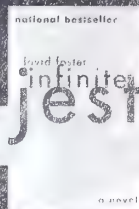
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# HARPER'S INDEX

- Average percentage increase in the national homicide rate for every one percent increase in the unemployment rate : 5.6
- Number of serious crimes prevented by every \$1 million spent incarcerating repeat felons, according to a RAND study : 61
  - Number prevented by every \$1 million spent on high-school graduation incentives : 258
- Percentage of federal spending on entitlement programs that goes to programs for the poor : 23
- Percentage of budget cuts to entitlements made by the 104th Congress that will come from those programs : 93
- Ratio of U.S. defense spending to the combined total spent by Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, and Libya : 2:1
  - Chances that a dollar of foreign aid is spent in the U.S. : 4 in 5
- Percentage change since January 1995 in the amount of food the average Mexican family eats : -29
- Amount that "side agreements" in NAFTA require the U.S. to spend on environmental cleanup : \$1,500,000,000
  - Amount the U.S. had spent by the end of 1996 : 0
- Percentage return on investment that a person who smuggles cocaine into Miami can expect : 300
- Percentage return on investment that a person who smuggles Freon into Miami can expect : 1,200
- Amount that is being spent by the federal and state governments to preserve the Florida panther, per panther : \$4,800,000
  - Amount that is being spent to preserve the painted snake coil forest snail, per snail : \$1.17
  - Percentage of Americans who believe that Joan of Arc is Noah's wife : 12
- Price paid at an Indiana auction last September for a 1975 Ford Escort previously owned by Pope John Paul II : \$102,000
- Price paid at a Los Angeles auction last September for a drug-rehab discharge form signed by Kurt Cobain : \$1,150
- Percentage of the heroin and cocaine consumed each year that is consumed by people on bail, probation, or parole : 60
  - Number of times that the mother-in-law of Washington, D.C., mayor Marion Barry has run for president : 2
- Amount that Western Village, a Japanese theme park, spent constructing an 80-foot replica of Mount Rushmore : \$30,000,000
  - Tons of rock that Alabama has imported in the last two years for chain gangs to crush : 188
  - Number of minor planets named after rock musicians : 8
- Amount that image consultancy Double XXposure charges to teach etiquette to hip-hop and rap artists, per class : \$250
- Year in which Tupperware salespeople began to say that air is "whispered" out of containers rather than "burped" : 1990
  - Number of years the mother in the *Family Circus* cartoon had the same hairstyle before changing it last year : 36
  - Hours of training required to become a licensed hair braider in New York City : 900
  - Hours of training required to become a New York City emergency medical technician : 117
- Percentage of Americans who believe that career preparation should begin in elementary school : 18
- Percentage of children between 6 and 9 who know that Jerry Lewis was the star of the original *Nutty Professor* : 66
  - Chances that an American adult knows how long it takes the Earth to orbit the sun : 1 in 2
- Chances that a public-high-school student is taught physical sciences by a teacher without a science background : 1 in 2
- Percentage of public-high-school teachers who favor banning students from kissing and hugging on school grounds : 69
  - Percentage of the light switches in Bob Packwood's private Senate quarters that were on dimmers : 100
- Number of Shakespeare's 37 plays that West Virginia senator Robert Byrd has quoted on the Senate floor : 37
  - Number of seconds that the average person can wait for an elevator before becoming visibly agitated : 40
  - Chances that a patient on the national waiting list for an organ will receive one this year : 1 in 3
- Cost of a 1-pound, anatomically correct, chocolate human heart replica, from the Anatomical Chart and Model Catalog : \$16.95
  - Number of candy hearts that the New England Confectionery Company made last year : 8,000,000,000
  - Number that said, "Fax Me" : 1,700,000

Figures cited have been adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of December 1996. Sources are listed on page 76.

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ible version of what happened."

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voice in the din of the asylum."

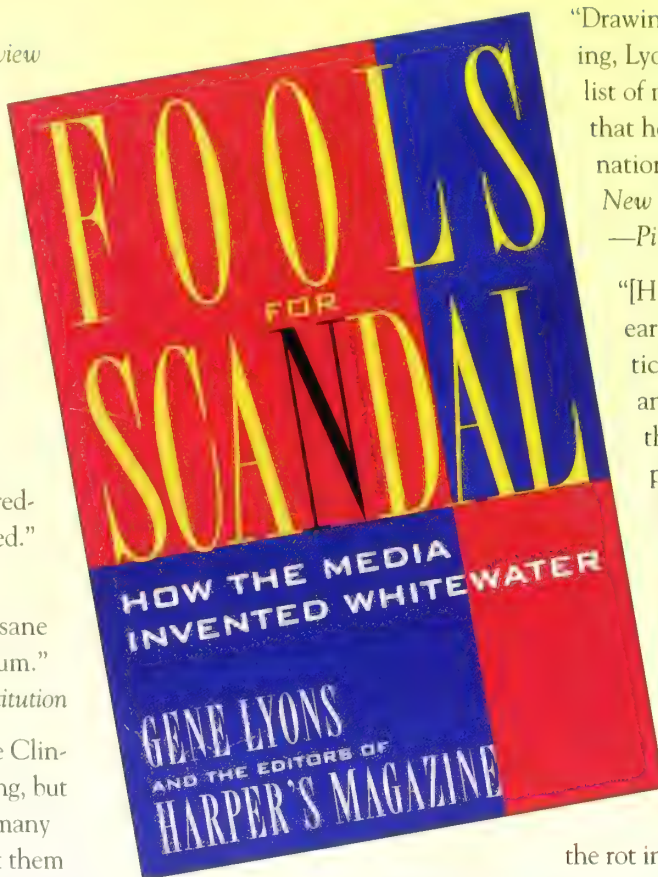
—*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

"Lyons doesn't claim that the Clin-  
tons never did anything wrong, but  
he convincingly shows that many  
[Whitewater] charges against them  
are exaggerated, politically motivated  
or flat-out wrong"

—*The [Cleveland] Plain Dealer*

"Lyons attacks with the same zeal that *New York  
Times* columnist William Safire displays when he goes  
after public officials whose veracity he doubts. The  
result has been indignation in the media and a coun-  
terattack on Lyons's credibility."

—*Christian Science Monitor*



"Drawing on years of newspaper-  
ing, Lyons catalogs a disturbing  
list of mistakes and omissions  
that he found in stories by the  
national press, especially [the]  
*New York Times* . . ."

—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

"[His] book, which follows a  
earlier *Harper's Magazine* ar-  
ticle, adds to the growing  
and legitimate argument  
that America's mainstream  
press, far from being ideo-  
logical, has simply gone  
bloodthirsty."

—*Los Angeles Times Book  
Review*

"Guaranteed to make  
you mad . . . Gene Lyons  
and *Harper's Magazine*  
ought to have a  
Pulitzer for digging at

the rot in the political press, but the  
press will see they don't get one." —*Arkansas Times*

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"He demonstrates pretty convincingly that the *Time*  
investigative reporter who broke the story ignored or  
didn't understand crucial information . . ."

—*Newsday*

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—*Molly Ivins*

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# READINGS

[Trade-offs]

## CLINTON'S BOGUS EARTH DAYS

*From "Dirty Dealing," by Jeffrey St. Clair and Alexander Cockburn, in the Fall 1996 issue of Forest Voice, published in Eugene, Oregon. The authors examined the environmental proposals and "deals" that President Clinton announced in the months prior to last November's election; they then outlined the "hidden costs" of each action.*

**THE DEAL:** In August, just weeks before the Democratic Convention, Clinton traveled to Yellowstone to announce that the oldest park in the nation had been saved from predations on its northern border by the Canadian mining giant, Noranda. In exchange for dropping its plan to gouge out a square-mile hole in Montana's Beartooth Mountains in search of gold, Clinton offered the company \$65 million worth of federal properties elsewhere. The national press faithfully depicted Clinton as the savior of Yellowstone.

**THE COST:** The salvation of Yellowstone is far from a done deal. It turns out that Noranda has veto power over any of the federal properties offered, and the feds cannot find enough land to Noranda's taste in Montana. If the search is to be extended outside the state, it will require congressional approval, which—given the secrecy and speed with which the

deal was hatched—is unlikely to happen soon, if ever. Indeed, Montana's Republican senator, Conrad Burns, has already vowed to kill any such maneuver.

Even if Noranda's land demands are met, talk of Yellowstone's salvation is both preposterous and premature. The mining sites that the company planned represent but a handful of the more than six thousand gold-mining claims in the Yellowstone ecosystem, any one of which could pose an equivalent threat to the region's rivers, mountains, and wildlife.

Moreover, the proposed Noranda exchange has given a green light to anyone holding mining claims around Yellowstone or any other national park: line up the bulldozers in front of the park gates and wait for the White House to phone with a lucrative buyout offer. Indeed, only days after the President's appearance at Yellowstone, a Wyoming company filed 175 mining claims along the ecologically pristine Rocky Mountain Front east of Glacier National Park.

**THE DEAL:** On the eve of the convention, Clinton, framed by a clutch of children, signed into law the Food Quality Protection Act. "I call this the Peace of Mind Act, because parents will know that the fruits, grains, and vegetables children eat are safe," Clinton pronounced. "Chemicals can go a long way in a small body." The press hailed the new act for its successful annulment of the Delaney Clause, a law long targeted by chemical manufacturers,



who claim that its restrictions are archaic.

THE COST: Perhaps the most outlandish of all of the President's pre-election grandstandings, the Food Quality Protection Act does to public-health and environmental-protection laws what Clinton's signing of the Welfare Act did to the New Deal—it hollows them out.

What's especially galling is that Clinton justified the act—like the welfare bill—in the

name of children. Since 1958, the Delaney Clause had imposed an absolute ban on carcinogens in processed food, a restriction that food and chemical companies tried to overthrow for almost forty years. From day one of the administration, EPA director Carol Browner set her sights on gutting Delaney, calling the law unenforceable and an unnecessary burden on the marketplace.

In the future, regulatory interdicts against carcinogens will be replaced by "cost-benefit analyses" and "risk assessments," determinations on the number of "acceptable" incidents of cancer traceable to foods. Under the new act, food- and chemical-industry scientists will play a major role in those determinations.

THE DEAL: The convention safely behind him, the intrepid President made his way to the north rim of the Grand Canyon in Arizona to announce that 1.8 million acres of federal lands in southern Utah known as the Escalante Canyon would now be designated a National Monument, supposedly saving the canyon from being strip-mined for coal. TV and newspaper coverage presented this as an event as momentous as the finest preservationist acts of Teddy Roosevelt.

THE COST: Much star power was on hand in Arizona. There on the north rim of the Grand Canyon, Clinton was introduced by Robert Redford, who called Clinton's impending proclamation an act of great spiritual and moral courage. As the President preened before the cameras, some environmentalists watched in amazement. Surely their position had long been that no less than 5.7 million acres, not 1.8, should be designated as wilderness or national park. In fact, the Utah wilderness campaign had been lavishly funded by environmental supporters with this end in mind.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt confessed later that afternoon that the designation of the Escalante Canyon was "mainly a name thing," and that National Monument status (unlike park or wilderness status) does not preclude cattle grazing, off-road-vehicle use, or hunting. When pressed, Babbitt also admitted that nothing in the proclamation actually prevented the coal-mining companies from moving forward with their claims.

Mainstream environmentalists rationalized the proclamation by saying that Clinton would come back in his second term, upgrade the designation from monument to wilderness or park, and include the missing 4 million acres. But Babbitt dashed those hopes by telling reporters that "this won't happen for generations."

[Hazards]

## CAUTION: SCHOOL AHEAD

*From a report on exterior structural problems at various New York City public schools, prepared in February 1996 by the city's Board of Education. The board found that 237 of the city's 1,165 schools contained "immediately hazardous" conditions. In November, the city's teachers union obtained the report and entered it as evidence in an ongoing lawsuit that seeks to force the board to repair the schools.*

Bronx High School of Science: cracks in walls and chimney; windows fall down when opened  
J.H.S. 136, the Bronx: 90 percent of windows need replacing  
J.H.S. 293, Brooklyn: termites and dry rot in window casings  
P.S. 11, Staten Island: exterior walls cracked; chipping bricks around building  
P.S. 115, Manhattan: crack 12 feet long and 3/4 inches wide in exterior masonry  
P.S. 123, Queens: chimney cracked  
P.S. 137, Manhattan: loose masonry; school has erected protective scaffolding on sidewalks  
P.S. 156, the Bronx: severe water damage in windows and walls  
P.S. 164, Manhattan: falling windowpanes  
P.S. 197, Brooklyn: capstone blown off north wing  
P.S. 223, Queens: parapets hazardous due to falling pieces of brick  
P.S. 340, Brooklyn: windows rotting and deteriorating  
P.S. 380, Brooklyn: windows leaking badly  
School of Career Development, Brooklyn: some windows boarded up  
Washington Irving High School, Manhattan: loose masonry; school has erected safety nets around building





*From Wood, by Andy Goldsworthy, published by Harry N. Abrams. Goldsworthy uses materials he finds in nature to create outdoor sculptures, which he then photographs. He lives in Dumfriesshire, Scotland.*

**THE DEAL:** Then the White House team was off to the Pacific Northwest, boarding Greyhound One in Seattle and heading south down Interstate 5 to Portland. There, under the alpenglow of Mount Hood, Clinton declared that he was saving the region's old-growth forests by working out a deal whereby timber companies would desist from logging the ancient groves inhabited by marbled murrelets. In exchange, they would receive permits to log equivalent volumes of timber on other national forestlands in Washington and Oregon.

**THE COST:** Usually a Clinton visit prompts at least a token demonstration from the timber industry, but this time the timber companies were ecstatic over the deal they had just brokered with the administration. The industry was not only given the right to cut the volume of logs it wanted but to do so without pesky contentions over the murrelet and with active support and encouragement from the White House. More significant, the timber will still be old-growth, but because it will be on less pro-

ductive sites, the logging companies will have to clear-cut twice as many acres of forest to get the "equivalent volume" they've been promised.

**THE DEAL:** Finally came a strong White House push for a deal that would allow Clinton to announce before the election that he had protected from destruction the precious Headwaters Grove in northern California, the last privately owned stand of virgin redwoods in America. The owner of Headwaters, Charles Hurwitz, originally acquired the grove in a hostile junk-bond takeover. In 1995, he was accused by the government of looting a savings and loan in Texas at a cost to taxpayers of \$1.6 billion. Rather than confiscate his timberlands as a down payment on that debt, Clinton offered a fast deal to acquire the grove, promising, again, compensatory properties. The national press asked no questions about this impending payoff to an infamous corporate raider.



THE FIRST: Hurwitz's part of the deal involves handing over only the core Headwaters Grove and a small buffer area, probably no more than 5,200 acres out of the 60,000 he owns. In return, he's asked for everything from San Francisco's historic Presidio to Treasure Island. In December, the state offered him a lucrative package that included the 9,000-acre Latour State Forest, but, emboldened by the spinelessness of the Clinton crowd, Hurwitz wanted to wait for the lands to be appraised. Mainstream environmental groups such as the Sierra Club are playing along; Sierra's executive director, Carl Pope, signaled early that he was ready to sign off on the Presidio and more federal properties: "We would be delighted to see some of those assets which are truly surplus traded for something as precious and wonderful as the Headwaters." Once again, the right to loot high-profile public assets is being exchanged for the right to loot other, less visible public assets. Clinton has mastered the act of making such deals look like righteous policy, but what's really getting traded are the nation's environmental concerns.

[Contraband]

## ONE GANGSTA'S PARADISE

*From a list of items removed from the cell of Ernest "Smookey" Wilson over a thirty-day period in 1992 by guards at the maximum-security Stateville Correctional Center in Joliet, Illinois. In a plea bargain with state prosecutors last year, Wilson, a gang leader who is serving a life sentence for ordering the killing of a rival gang member at Stateville, provided the names of prison officials who, he said, had helped him acquire the contraband; no prison employees have yet been charged. The list was compiled from prison reports obtained by the Chicago Tribune and appeared in the paper's November 10, 1996, issue.*

September 15

Cellular telephone battery charger and 4 cellular telephone batteries  
Casio 2-inch color television  
Nintendo Game Boy with cartridges  
Electronic chess game  
Electric iron  
Electric skillet  
2 hot pots  
13 bottles high-priced cologne

September 15

Motorola pen/pencil

3 marijuana cigarette butts  
1/2 gram cocaine  
3/4 gram heroin  
32 small plastic bags  
Remote control for VCR  
Tube of Crazy Glue

October 4

Cellular telephone battery charger, battery, and adapter  
Electronic digital scale

October 14

Cellular telephone battery charger, battery, and adapter  
Digital wristwatch with memory bank  
Electric coffee pot  
15.7 grams cocaine  
\$230 cash  
2 glass bottles broken into pieces  
Miniature basketball backboard, rim, and net

October 14-15

52 unauthorized articles of clothing  
13-inch color television  
Cable converter  
AM/FM stereo receiver, stereo equalizer, cassette tape player, turntable, and 8-track tape deck  
Power microphone  
Clock radio  
Remote-control portable lamp  
17 self-addressed stamped envelopes to Talman Federal Savings and Loan  
18 mail-in withdrawal slips  
3 savings-and-loan receipts  
City of Chicago check stubs

*Items recovered at unknown times*

Cellular telephone  
6-inch hunting knife  
Homemade darts with needle points  
Portable tabletop washing machine (recovered twice)

[Commendations]

## WHEN HOLLYWOOD GETS IT RIGHT

*From "Your 100 Best Conservative Movies," by Spencer Warren, in the March 11, 1996, issue of The National Review. The list is composed primarily of suggestions from the Review's readers.*

BEST MOVIES ABOUT DROPPING THE ATOMIC BOMB: *The Beginning or the End* (1947) and *Above and Beyond* (1953). Both notable for their contrast to ABC's vile documentary on



[Evidence]  
SCENES OF THE CRIME



rom a series of photographs by Jonathan Eeles of places in south London where crimes allegedly occurred. At top are "Threatening to ill" and "Assault"; at bottom are "Attempted Abduction of a Minor" and "Attempted Robbery." Eeles's photographs were originally mmissioned by defense lawyers to be used as evidence in court. They appeared in the November 24, 1996, issue of *The Sunday ewiev*, the magazine of the *London Independent*.

the *Enola Gay* mission and other press attacks on this necessary feat of American arms. The first film is important because it points out that the success of the \$2 billion Manhattan Project was really a triumph of free enterprise. Not only scientists but "men, women, builders, carpenters, electricians," all knowing little about the project, met the challenge by "working, working, working."

BEST MOVIE ABOUT A POOR FAMILY'S STRUGGLE TO SUCCEED: *The Southerner* (1945). Dramatizes the faith, love, and determination that unite sharecropper's family against terrible adversity. Sharecropper's uncle collapses in the field and dies in the man's arms with the words "Grow your own crops."

BEST MOVIE ABOUT THE EVIL OF OUR ENEMIES: *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936). In this

Errol Flynn epic, a British commander accepts a treacherous enemy's pledge of safe passage for innocent mer., women, and children. All are slaughtered. Should be required viewing for all hostage negotiators.

BEST SCENE DRAMATIZING THE SANCTITY OF INNOCENT LIFE: *Rob Roy* (1995). Our hero's wife is raped by his enemy, but Rob Roy embraces the child she conceives as an innocent life that must be brought into the world.

BEST MOVIE DRAMATIZING PRE-GREAT SOCIETY VIEW OF PENOLOGY: *The Big House* (1930). Still among the best prison dramas. The inmates here have no radio and no weight room. If they get out of line, they are deposited in "the dungeon," where they stew alone for thirty days on bread and water. And when they riot and take guards hostage, the warden answers their de-





This poster was designed by Anatoly Belsky for the 1932 Russian film *Goryachaya Krov* ("Hot-Blooded") but was rejected because it did not "conform to officially approved artistic styles." It appears in *Film Posters of the Russian Avant-Garde*, by Susan Pack, published by Taschen.

mand for freedom thus: "I'll see 'em in hell first. Let 'em have it!" Whereupon machine guns open fire and tanks crash through the inmates' barricades. Was the lower crime rate in those days just a coincidence?

**BEST ANTI-ANTI-AMERICAN MOVIE:** *Barcelona* (1994). Portrays the last gasp of European anti-Americanism—the Soviet-inspired campaign to halt U.S. missile deployment in the early Eighties—through the eyes of two young Americans trying to pick up Spanish girls. Good fun.

**BEST CONSERVATIVE SCIENCE-FICTION MOVIE:** *The Thing* (1951). The scientist as Rational Fool. Researchers in the Arctic defrost an unfriendly visitor from outer space. Here is an early prototype of the scientists who oppose any commonsense policy to defend ourselves, such as those behind the nuclear freeze.

**BEST MOVIE ILLUSTRATING THE BLATHER OF POLITICIANS:** *A Face in the Crowd* (1957). This will stand as the best depiction of an Arkansas demagogue until Barbra Streisand produces a movie biography of the forty-second President.

[Diatribes]

## FAREWELL, GARY FRANKS, AND GOOD RIDDANCE

From "Gary Franks: An African American Gladiator Falls in Battle," an open letter written by Representative William Clay (D., Mo.) after last November's election and distributed to members of the Congressional Black Caucus. Franks was the only Republican member of the caucus and had clashed with the group politically, particularly over his proposal to ban race-based congressional districting.

**E**lection Day 1996 is now history, and the voters chose to return most members of Congress for another two years. One member not so fortunate was the black representative from Connecticut, Gary Franks. Franks's foot-shuffling, head-scratching, Amos-and-Andy brand of Uncle Tomism came to an end when the



few minority voters in his district joined with an overwhelming number of white voters, finally tired of his racist assaults on black people, to defeat his bid for reelection.

Franks's six years in Congress were highlighted by his support of legislation inimical to the interests of most black folk. Like a growing number of black opportunists, Franks served as a cheap "gun for hire," willing to assassinate those blacks who seek an equitable distribution of political power.

What black politics needed most in the 1990s was a core group of black Republicans who would promote black causes and give black voters a real choice between the two political parties. What we got instead were stereotypical black Republicans, cloned in the radical images of Newt Gingrich, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson. Franks joined in their conspiracy to make the Republican Party a safe harbor for the bigots of America.

There is an emerging cadre of highly educated, articulate black professionals who profit handsomely by attacking African-American leaders and by ridiculing civil-rights legislation. Although their numbers are minuscule, the media treat them as if they speak for large constituencies. They are well-paid, widely publicized gladiators, commissioned by sinister forces to destroy government programs that uplift the poor and downtrodden.

The white community has discovered the Achilles' heel of many black professionals. To solidify support for programs against black people, it is necessary only to wine and dine some blacks at exclusive country clubs and fancy restaurants. Somehow, oysters Rockefeller and clams casino turn miseducated black men's brains into receptive sponges ready to soak up the latest anti-black invective.

My concern with the vanquished Gary Franks goes much deeper than abhorring his slave-like rhetoric. It has to do with the fact that he is a self-hating black who is afraid to confront racism or racists seriously. Not once during his highly publicized career did Franks raise his voice—feeble as it was—in meaningful protest of the abusive treatment heaped upon blacks. Not once did he support other black members of Congress in a broad-based assault against white bigotry. Not once did he open his eyes to de facto racial discrimination.

Though he's gone from Congress, Gary Franks is still a threat because of his insufferable capacity to demean the causes of African Americans. He, like the other so-called new black conservatives, has been thoroughly brainwashed by those who preach that race is not an impediment to equal opportunity. He has no discernible black personality.

[Consideration]

## GARDEN-VARIETY XENOPHOBIA

From "The Mania for Native Plants in Nazi Germany," by Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, in *Concrete Jungle*, to be published next month by Juno Books. Wolschke-Bulmahn teaches garden history at the University of Hannover in Germany.

**I**n current gardening and landscape design, the vogue is for "native plants." Rodale's *All-New Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening*, published in 1992, defines a wildflower garden as "a place where plants native to the United States are arranged in pleasing design and grown under conditions to support their natural state." In hundreds of such gardening books and magazines, "foreign" or "exotic" plants are condemned as alien invaders or aggressive intruders.

There is, however, much disagreement on what constitutes a "native" plant. According to Rodale's, "Most people use their state boundaries as cut-off points for plant selection. Others consider any plant native to North America to be acceptable." The idea of using only plants representative of a particular state or country may be an interesting garden motif, but it has nothing at all to do with nature and nativeness.

In the United States, for example, do we define a plant as native if it is assumed to have grown in a region before European settlement? Do we ask if Native Americans brought the plant with them when they crossed the land bridge from Siberia? Are we dealing with the past hundred, five hundred, or a thousand years?

The native-plants ideology is highly political: its advocates sometimes connect the call for native plants with nationalistic and racist ideas about society. Alwin Seifert, a leading landscape architect in Nazi Germany, was the most radical promoter of native plants. He argued that Germans had to respect their landscape's poverty of species as its national destiny. In 1933, immediately after the Nazi takeover, Seifert wanted to "ban all that until now has pleased the heart of a gardener: everything high-bred, overfed, conspicuous, foreign."

In 1941, German landscape architects proposed a law forbidding the use of foreign plants in German landscapes. One year later, a team of German botanists called for the extermination of *Impatiens parviflora*, a small forest plant that was seen as a stranger and a competitor of the "native" *Impatiens noli tangere*. The botanists applied a social analogy: "As with the fight against Bol-



showism, our entire occidental culture is at stake, so with the fight against this Mongolian invader, an essential element of this culture, namely, the beauty of our home forest, is at stake."

Racist arguments for the exclusive use of na-

tive plants have appeared in the United States as well. In 1937, American landscape architect Jens Jensen wrote:

The gardens that I create myself shall . . . be in harmony with their landscape environment and the racial characteristics of its inhabitants. They shall express the spirit of America and therefore shall be free of foreign character as far as possible. The Latin and the Oriental crept and creeps more and more over our land. . . .

Similar ideas flourish even in today's discussion of native plants. The book *Landscaping with Native Plants of Texas and the Southwest*, published in 1991, explains that "plants are a part of our great national heritage. The plants that have sunk their roots in Southwest soil since the last Ice Age can help us understand that our psyches and society are equally rooted to the earth." In other books, characterizations such as "invasive exotic weeds," "nonindigenous invasive weeds," "exotic-species invasions," and "foreign invaders" are common.

There are good reasons for using native plants in gardens, including low maintenance, adaptation to place, preservation from extinction, and aesthetics. However, there is no reason for a native-plant doctrine, nor for the assumption that native plants alone serve environmental goals. The segregation into "good" and "bad" plants, natives and nonnatives, and the condemnation of the latter as aggressive invaders are highly simplistic notions, masking problems instead of solving them.

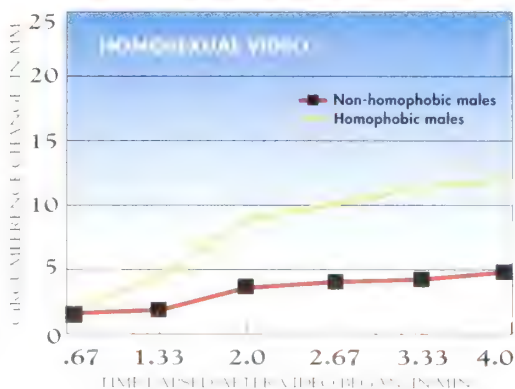
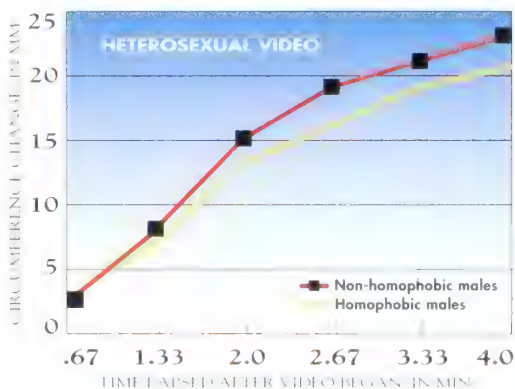
[Cases]

## MAKING THE FINAL ROUNDS

From *Dancing with Mr. D*, by Dr. Bert Keizer, to be published in March by Nan A. Talese/Doubleday. Keizer is a physician at a home for the aged and the terminally ill in Amsterdam. Although doctor-assisted suicides are not legal in the Netherlands, since 1981 they have gone unprosecuted as long as physicians follow court-ordered guidelines; among other stipulations, the request for death must be voluntary, the patient must be experiencing "unbearable pain," and there must be no other "reasonable solutions to the problem." Translated from the Dutch by the author.

**R**ichard Schoonhoven: fifty-five-year-old widower, incurable throat cancer. He arrived today from Het Veem Hospital. The nurses' notes sent with him say, "Mr. Schoonhoven has been asking for death these past few weeks

### [Findings] FILM STUDIES



From "Is Homophobia Associated with Homosexual Arousal?" a study by Henry F. Adams et al. in the August 1996 *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. The above graphs show the difference in sexual arousal between "non-homophobic" (line with squares) and "homophobic" (plain line) heterosexual men upon the viewing of "sexually explicit" heterosexual videos (top) and male homosexual videos (bottom). First, study participants completed psychological questionnaires to determine the level of their homophobia, then wore a penile "strain gauge" to measure the change in their penile circumference while viewing the videos. Researchers found that the homophobic group "demonstrate[d] significant sexual arousal to male homoerotic stimuli"; furthermore, "the only [statistically] significant difference" in how "turned-on" the two groups were was in response to the male homosexual video.





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but the doctors have not responded to that."

In the doctor's notes I read a lot about laboratory tests and X rays; I also read that Mr. Schoonhoven is aware of his diagnosis. There's not one word about his death wish. Doctors often regard such a wish as a tiny sore—not much of a bother right now, hardly worth mentioning, but something that might turn extremely nasty at some point.

[Lament]

## AFTER THE THAW

*From an interview with Finnish writer Petter Sairanen in the Summer 1996 issue of The Review of Contemporary Fiction, a special issue devoted to new Finnish fiction. Sairanen is the author of Firelight, a novel, and The World Is Useless, a play. The interview was conducted by Philip Landon, who asked Sairanen to characterize contemporary Finnish fiction.*

**F**or thousands of years, the Finns have struggled against the cold. The enemy was huge and perpetual, but we grew fond of it. And we had a secret weapon against it: the sauna. After a sauna, the cold seemed like a tolerable adversary, even a dear one. You could feel confident as you fought in its grip when you knew the sauna was warming at home.

But the modern world has conquered the weather. Energy has been squandered with admirable success. Palm trees decorate the corridors of the shopping malls; tropical soundtracks stimulate their growth.

Nowadays, Finns do not know how to live because they are not allowed to wrestle with their darling enemy, the cold. We live in rooms where the temperature is always the same, wondering what has gone wrong. We feel empty. This predicament also manifests itself in our fiction.

The characters in our novels and short stories are often hollow, unable to decide what they want, unable to fathom the cause of their emptiness. This sort of fiction is also common in other countries of conspicuous consumption. Of course, other countries may not have conquered the cold—they have more temperate climates. But they have all conquered something, and they used to be just as fond of that adversary as we Finns were of the frost. They feel equally bewildered. And hollow.

When I go to shake hands with Mr. Schoonhoven he says immediately, "Doctor, I want to die. Please help me."

"But didn't you discuss this with the doctors at the hospital?"

"I did, but they ignored me." He begins to sob uncontrollably. I soothe him as best I can, then go call Het Veem.

What happened? Schoonhoven was hospitalized for a throat operation. On admission they agreed not to resuscitate him if he went into cardiac arrest. During the operation something went horribly wrong: a sizable amount of tissue fell down into the trachea, causing respiratory arrest. They couldn't get the lump out and so performed a tracheotomy. Then he went into cardiac arrest, and without a moment's hesitation they began to resuscitate him.

That was wrong, but I can sympathize with it. It must be impossible in such a situation simply to say, *Oh, what the hell, he didn't want to be resuscitated anyway.* But when he came to, he had lost almost all power of speech and still had the tube from the tracheotomy sticking out of his throat. Also, as a consequence of his brain having been without blood for a while, his left arm and leg were paralyzed.

As soon as he was awake again and fully aware of his situation, he asked for death. The doctors were reluctant. They didn't say yes and didn't say no, and in the end nothing happened. Then, in his despair, he began to ask everybody for death, all the time—day in, day out. This got on the doctors' nerves.

On the day we've arranged for him to die, I find Schoonhoven in a sprightly mood, almost cheerful. At 9:00 A.M. he's sitting in bed, shaving himself, "so the nurse doesn't have to do it later on."

At 10:00 A.M. I enter with the hemlock. Schoonhoven's daughter is there. He is in full control of the situation. "Is that what I have to drink? Just hand it to me, will you?"

Although we do our best to support him upright while he drinks, he's a little too hasty and is seized by a coughing fit, during which at least half of what he swallowed comes sputtering out the tube in his throat. But he soon gestures that he wants to go on drinking, and when I see the great effort with which he raises the cup to his lips, I realize how horribly ill he must be feeling to be able to drink death so eagerly in the presence of his child. We lay him back on the pillows, and his daughter sits next to him. He looks at her calmly and asks, "How am I doing?"

She laughs through her tears and strokes his face, speaks softly to him. "Now you're going to Gerrie . . . and to Adrie . . . and to Mummy . . . and to Susha."





*"Waiting," by Cincinnati artist January Knoop. Knoop created the sculpture from the teeth and bones of various animals, including cows, sheep, and chipmunks. The sculpture was on display in December at the University of Cincinnati.*

At "Susha" he immediately opens his eyes. "But that's a cat!"

"Hush now," she says. "I'm sure they take cats there."

He mutters once more in surprise, "A cat . . .," then shrugs his shoulders with a smile. That's his last gesture. Ten minutes later he is dead.

We linger in the room for a while, looking at him. His daughter tells me that yesterday she thought he might die during the night. She would have felt let down, she says, as if he had abandoned her.

Soon after, a receptionist calls to say that some relations of Mr. Schoonhoven have arrived and would like to have a word with me. Unpleasant surprise. Although all is well, I do feel caught in the act. A mad nephew or cousin? His neighbors, it turns out. I tell them he died this morning, and the woman asks, "Did he suffer much, doctor?" I tell her that he passed away quietly. The woman takes my hands and says, "You helped him a little, didn't you? I hope you did, he wanted to die so badly. God, how ill he was."

I could have kissed her, because one of the most exhausting things about these planned deaths is the doubt that always gnaws at you: is this really what he wants?

**A**ns Van Duin is forty-six. She's been at St. Ossius for nearly eight years now. She has multiple sclerosis. The disease has almost blinded her due to a tenacious inflammation of the retina. She has no husband or children. She herself is an only child; her parents visit her every day. Today I find her father crying in the corridor.

His wife was feeding Ans, he tells me, and apparently she wasn't paying attention, because she held the fork in midair for a moment, and Ans, unable to see it, tried to reach the food with her mouth. The sight of that had upset him.

It might be that Ans is slowly moving toward ending her life. She has mentioned it a few times to me, very cautiously. Her disease has now advanced to the stage where she can't sit up, and she thinks it has gone far enough.

I will feel all right if that's her decision and





By Philip-Lorca diCorcia The photograph was on display last September at the PaceWildenstemMacGill gallery in New York City. DiCorcia lives in New York City.

won't even tear the last five minutes, which are always difficult moments for me. It's because she's blind. I won't feel so watched; I'll be able to waver more.

Ans wants the beaker. She asks me to tell her something funny at the end, "then I'll go out laughing." She doesn't want her parents mixed up in these negotiations in any way. "It's too much for them. I'm their only child, you know. I can't ask them to approve this."

She tells me a childhood memory. She suffered from not having a brother or sister. When it was suppertime and all the children were called inside, she would pretend that she had a brother and start calling out to him. "Kees! Kees, it's time for supper." Her father caught her doing this once and hit her for such nonsense.

"No," she says. "I can't talk about all this with him."

I might think that I'm personally detached this time, but Ans's case is working in me all the same. Recently I had this dream: Ans is dead and lies in state in our parish church. The glass coffin lies across the altar and is filled to the brim with Formalin. I run into my

colleague Dr. Mieke, who says, "Don't you find it a bit funny the way they've laid it all out?" Then I see what she means. On the altar behind the coffin there's a collection of all the heart valves, the artificial hip joints, the vascular prostheses, and the many catheters that over the years have been placed in Ans's body; around this heap there's a veritable dike formed by the tens of thousands of pills she has swallowed. The mourners stand in a half-circle around the coffin. Then what we all fear happens: her leg starts moving, then she shoves the lid off the coffin. She clambors clumsily out of the aquarium—Snow White, Houdini.

Ans doesn't want anyone else to be present on the appointed day, and, as I said, I feel less anxious about the ritual this time because she is blind. When I enter at the arranged hour, she quickly turns her face toward me. The tentative reaching out in her unseeing eye immediately brings me to the verge of tears.

When she has finished the drink, she asks, "Will you come and sit with me? Can I hold your hand? There, that's fine."



We talk a little about her father, always a difficult man. She loved her student days, until she got pregnant. Her father forced her, with all sorts of threats, to have an abortion.

"But that was really . . . that abortion . . . there's a lot of alcohol in this stuff, isn't there? . . . That abortion was really unnecessary, because we had money . . . and plenty of space . . . and things . . ." Then she slumped against me. "Things . . ." That was her last word. They had things for a child. That she should enter death with this little death on her lips saddens me.

After ten minutes Mieke looks in. Ans has died.

"What are you doing there, Anton?"

"I'm crying."

"About what?"

"About parents and children."

"That covers just about all categories, I think."

I pay a visit to Mrs. Poniatowski, one of my favorite patients at St. Ossius. She has asked me here for a glass of wine. She has lung cancer. "And I certainly know why," she says, a cigarette dangling from her lips.

When I enter her room she's standing by the window, trying to punch some extra holes in her belt with a pair of pliers. As she gets sicker, she keeps losing weight. She doesn't have the strength anymore to handle the pliers properly, so I take over for her and make another hole in the belt.

"Maybe you'd better make another one?"

Why do those pliers make such a horrible sound? With every click we realize more fully that I am punching a trajectory into this belt.

She looks at me, and then away, as she asks, "How many more holes, do you think?"

"I don't know."

In her deathly white face her eyes seem like two jumpy, jet-black beads. She says she feels people's glances when she leaves her room. She thinks everybody can see the humiliating traces of her struggle.

Mrs. Poniatowski's last evening. Her son Peter doesn't want to be present. That is to say, not in the actual room. He has asked me a few times if all this really has to be handled in such a brutish way. He would rather see his mother get worse, see that she's more seriously ill, nearer to the end, collapsing at the edge of the grave so that the merest push—more like a slight touch, really—would suffice. But not this, not the way she is now. Shit, she's still walking!

I know what he's trying to say, but I understand her better. We've arranged for Dr. Mieke and myself to go to her at eight o'clock. Peter will be in the building but not in the room.

We go to her room at eight exactly, but she sends us away. She wants to watch the news first. Alone.

Mieke is a little tense. "What the hell does she think? That she rang for a pizza?"

After the news, she rings. When we enter her room she's standing by the window, "taking a last look at Earth."

We say a few things to each other. I tell her that I think she's a splendid woman, and that I'm grateful to have met her, and that I never found it difficult to look after her. She tells me that she is proud that I was her doctor and that we've become friends. She gets up and gives me a kiss, mixed with tears, on my mouth. She hands me an envelope. "I've written something for you, copied it really, since writing is what you care for most."

I'm standing there feeling rather awkward with my hemlock—you don't want to urge her, but still. She's looking in her cupboard for a bottle of wine that she says she wants Mieke and I to open immediately after her death.

When that's all done she lies down with a sigh of relief and indicates that she is ready. I tell her it's better if she sits up, it goes down more easily. After a few sips through a straw she says, "Dear child, this straw is much too big." She wants the blue straw. That's better. Now she wants a towel to wipe the sticky stuff off her lips. "I want to stay clean until the very end."

The drink finished, Mieke and I each hold one of her hands.

"Look at me," she says. "Isn't this wonderful that I may die with two friends holding me?" She is about to embark on a speech about friendship. "Because, you two, friends are . . . you are . . ." Then she falls asleep, and seven minutes later she's dead. Oddly enough, this takes us by surprise.

I start to think that we should have pattered about a little longer before giving her the drink. Now it feels as if we've pushed her under in mid-sentence. Mieke does not agree. "If you'd got involved in a real conversation, it would have been more and more difficult to reach for the drink. And wasn't that what we came here for, after all?"

It's not until I get home that I discover the envelope in my pocket. She has written out a piece of Conrad for me:

"Droll thing life is—that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself—that comes too late—a crop of unextinguishable regrets. I have wrestled with death. It is the most unexciting contest you can imagine. It takes place in an impalpable greyness, with nothing underfoot, with nothing around, without spectators, without clamour, without glory, with-



out the great desire for victory, without the great tenacity to defend it, in a sickly atmosphere of tepid scepticism, without much belief in your own right, and still less in that of your adversary."

Dear Anton, Conrad had days when he felt better. But not many days, and not much better. Your Suzy Poniatowski.

**I**m talking to a man about his father. Father is ninety-two, struck down by one of those strokes that make you wonder why God has to be so slapdash in his work. The man is almost totally destroyed as a person but breathes, swallows, pees, shits, and, if given a stomach tube, can pant on for another year.

No one wants this, so while talking to the son I keep looking for a way out. I can't seem to find a solution until he says, "I have Father's euthanasia card here with me. Would that be of any help to you?" In a comic sketch this scene would continue as follows: "Euthanasia card? Why didn't you say so right away? Mary, put the patient in a single room. Henk, get out the morphine. Beppie, call the undertaker. And you, sir, all the best."

Then that's not the way it goes? Well, yes, but more gradually.

[Contemplation]

## THE YEARNING OF THE SCREW

*From Toolbox, a collection of essays by Fabio Morábito, published by Xenos Books. Morábito lives in Pedregal del Maurel, Mexico. Translated from the Spanish by Geoff Hargreaves.*

**O**il is water with bad nerves. Instead of advancing fluidly and unproblematically like water, oil insinuates itself and minces along. Oil is water with hips. Whereas water, frank and anarchic, simple-minded and monotonous, liberates the world from its secrets, oil piles on secrets, like water that lost its mission in some cranny and forever forfeited its innocence.

Exactly the same distinction exists between a nail and a screw. A screw is morose and circumspect, like oil. It is like a lubricated nail, manufactured to be mindful of other materials and to get along with them, careful not to impose its own laws. In a screw the brusque commands of the nail have been transmuted into dialogue and negotiation. Hence the joints held by a screw are more durable. In place of the hostile takeover there is gentle infiltration.

A nail is heroic and exciting. It moves in an epic world. A screw is ugly, torpid, asthmatic, having little initial impact and betraying no eagerness, no feeling whatsoever. But therein lies its strength. How is it possible to resist its spiraled edges, the way it never looks you full in the face but offers you only its perpetual profile? The threads of a screw are the absence of all face and all intention. How can you argue with it? A screw is a deluge of questions; it never provides an answer.

By sacrificing the excitement of entering its materials with a blunt incisiveness, the screw secures every millimeter it gains as it advances. Like the snail and its delicate slime, the screw leaves behind, as it moves ahead, a winding track that guarantees it will find its way back cleanly, without obstacles. Thus, a second screw can use the same route in the future—we can go so far as to say that one screw is always another, that it is inexhaustible.

Hence the screw is careful never to go against the grain. It advances via the most timid of associations, without the slightest stumbling, like a hand that caresses us in sleep, never leaving our skin, so that we don't awaken. Perhaps it's precisely this innate caution in its conduct that gives a screw its melancholic, almost tubercular appearance. The screw envies the strength of the nail and its purity.

In its desire to be a nail, a screw shows a yearning for a lost, pristine world where everything was transparent, straightforward, obvious at first glance, where deals were violent but without subterfuge. This profound longing for a more fiery world is clearly visible in the head of a screw, a head always split painfully in two, like a face in frustration or a heart that's been deeply wounded.

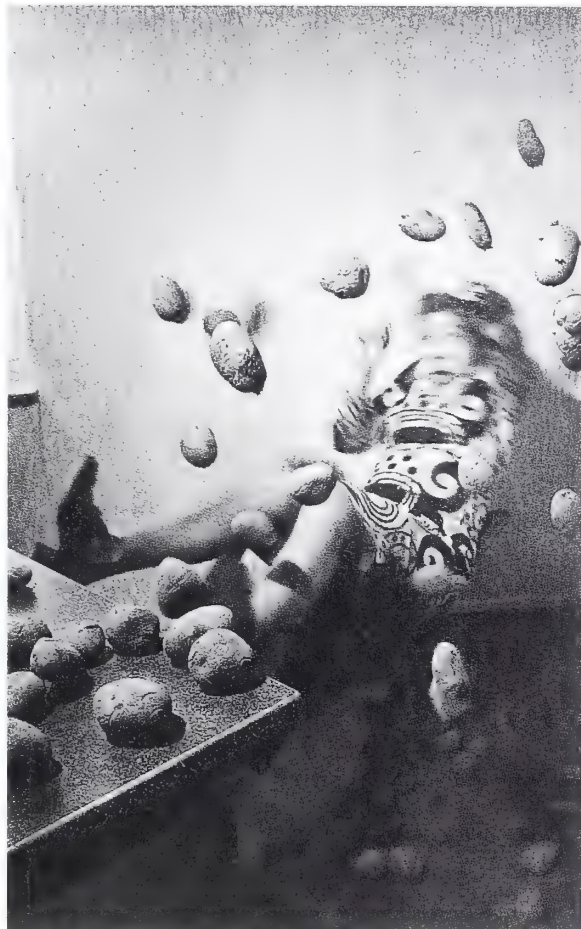
[Synopsis]

## TWISTED

*From Michael Almereyda's contribution to "Funnel Vision," a collection of plot summaries inspired by the movie Twister that appeared in the Fall 1996 issue of Scenario: The Magazine of Screenwriting Art. Scenario asked several independent filmmakers to write "what they would have done with Twister's basic premise." Almereyda wrote and directed Nadja, a vampire film shot in part with a Fisher-Price toy camera.*

**I** seem to remember writing and directing a movie called *Twister* back in the spring of 1988. The budget: \$3 million. The script called





From *Küchenkoller* ("Kitchen Frenzy"), a series of photographs by Anna and Bernhard Blume, on display last spring at the Milwaukee Art Museum. The Blumes live in Cologne, Germany.

for a brief appearance by a single tornado, but we opted to scratch that as we were short on cash and fearful that the resulting twister would look like something out of an Ed Wood movie or like the sad miniature funnel cloud—generated by a vaporizer and a machine that seemed suitable for the production of cotton candy—that I once saw at the Hurricane Museum in Key West, Florida.

I look forward to the inevitable double bill: *Twister* and *Twister*—the fat and the lean, fast and slow, famous and obscure—and in that same spirit, I can imagine merging and remaking both movies, two for the price of one.

The one character I'd retain from the Jan De Bont picture is the Dodge Ram truck. Much as I admire the human actors in his *Twister*, I couldn't help noticing the absence of convincing emotional connections between them. It doesn't really matter, of course; it hardly takes anything away from that movie to admit that I felt as much empathy for the

truck as for any of the people inside it.

As for human protagonists, I'd be inclined to re-enlist two local Midwesterners, respectively the youngest and oldest cast members from my *Twister*, real troopers: Lindsay Christman and William S. Burroughs. I'd give the Helen Hunt part to Burroughs, surrounding him with his usual coterie of wild boys and stray cats. Lindsay, with her whiskey voice and stoic good looks, could take on the Bill Paxton role. She was nine in 1988, which would put her at seventeen now. I'm betting that she and Burroughs might have something to say to each other. Or maybe they wouldn't, and that could be the point, too. Anyhow, I can picture them together in the Dodge truck, cruising across Kansas on the lookout for strange weather. On occasion I'd intercut new footage with already existing and unimprovable shots from De Bont's movie. I get a certain lift picturing Bill Burroughs saying, "Cow . . . Another cow," then cutting to a heifer tumbling across





"20 Carols," by Caryl Burtner. Burtner cut the photos from her high school yearbooks from 1970 through 1974. Her work was on display last month at the Nexus Contemporary Art Center in Atlanta. She lives in Richmond, Virginia.

the windshield. In other patches, of course, the dialogue might have to be adjusted. I'd be content to let them just drive around and improvise their way through it, stopping for food and gas and cocktails.

[Market Analysis]

## YESTERDAY'S BOY OF TODAY

From "Does Your 'Research' Embrace the Boy of Today?" a column originally published in 1922 in *Printers' Ink*, an advertising trade journal. The column was reprinted in issue number 6 of *Primary Documents*, a 'zine published by Stephen Duncombe and Andrew Mattson, professors of American Studies at the State University of New York at Old Westbury.

**T**he first commandment of advertising is Pope's dictum: "The proper study of mankind is man." But the advertising man who expects to hold his job ten years hence should also re-

member that "the boy is father to the man."

We hear old-timers lamenting the difference between themselves and those of us in our early thirties, but we are merely a continuation of this older generation. The gulf that exists between them and us is a thin line compared with the gulf that exists between us and the boys of today. Those old-timers read fairy tales like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Aladdin*; so did we. They went to district school to the tune of a hickory switch; so did we. They used a hug-me-tite buggy when they went a-courtin'; so did we. They rode in horsecars and trolley cars, sowed wild oats, and bought a penny's worth of all-day suckers and licorice (when they could get the penny); so did we.

But can we draw any such comparison between ourselves and the youth of today? I am afraid not.

Study the boy of today. He is a tight-mouthed little materialist, "wise" beyond belief, keen enough in his knowledge of human nature to present toward his parents the side that his parents desire. There is very little of the revolt and rebellion in him that we had tamed out of us with a razor strap.

Speed is this boy's keynote. To him nothing



is impossible. He looks forward to 300 miles per hour with confidence, when to us 60 was something to be spoken of with awe. While he may read some of our boyhood literary favorites in order to please his parents, down in his heart it is "old stuff." New stories have a hold on him, those involving modern methods of speed, of wireless communication, of flying, even of mental telepathy. Fairy tales mean little in his young life, for the actualities he sees exceed them. Because he is a realist and a materialist, the boy of today works on the principle of "cause and effect." He analyzes. His mind really thinks, quickly.

Today's boy is a persistent and discriminating reader of advertisements. Recently I watched a group of small boys being sold on electric trains. There were three advertisements in one boy's magazine, and the whole group studied these ads. Two of the ads were full-page, in color, and one was a half-page.

The half-page advertisement clinched the sale. It was devoted to the mechanical perfection of the train. It was realistic. It talked to the boys as if they possessed a knowledge of mechanics. And today's boy does have a mechanical knowledge undreamed of in his father's youth. Yes, the boy of today is practical. Speed is, one might say, his god.

Give him careful study and attention, Mr. Ad Man, or else you may be stepping down before your time.

[Fiction]

## THE SHIP VISITOR

*From The Ordinary Seaman, a novel by Francisco Goldman, to be published this month by Atlantic Monthly Press. Goldman is the author of The Long Night of White Chickens. He lives in New York City.*

After a night of freezing rain, the Ship Visitor will find them. He'll board a ship whose name and port of registration will have recently been painted over. As a ship visitor, he boards some twenty or thirty ships a week; he knows how to size a situation up right off. He has seen abandoned crews and ships before, but this will be the first time he'll be struck by the image of a rusted old freighter whose sole cargo is dead autumn leaves. Beyond the enclosed basin where the ship is berthed stand trees that will have been stripped of leaves by the night's storm, and looking up, he'll see a few still rumbling

against the overcast sky. He'll see wet brown leaves snared in the conning tower and pressed flatly to the bridge windows, clinging to the stays and shrouds running from the masts as if caught and shriveled by high-voltage jolts in the galvanized wire. He'll see ice-stiffened wads of leaves amidst haphazardly massed garbage and litter in every windward nook and cranny of the deck, leaves scattered over the flooded and icing bottom of an open hold, and

[Twists of Fate]

## AS THE WORLD TURN-SIGNALS

*From a press release issued last August by the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority.*

Today the Los Angeles MTA announced the winners of its "Tales from the Fast Lane" contest, in which the public was asked to submit true-life carpooling or vanpooling stories. The top prize went to Kimberly Arguelles of Covina for her tale of finding her long-lost sister while commuting to and from work:

"I've often wondered what happened to my younger sister. When we were very young, our parents were killed by a drunk driver, and we were adopted by separate families and relocated. Years later, a coworker asked me if I would like to join a car pool. Meeting the other riders, I noticed that one lady looked familiar. As we carpoled to work, we both started sharing our childhood stories, and I was shocked to discover she was my long-lost sister!"

Second place went to John Streltzo of Thousand Oaks for his story of how he was able to send two kids to college with the money he saved by vanpooling. Two third prizes were awarded: to Bernard Hernandez of Huntington Beach for his tale about undergoing knee surgery and how joining a car pool saved his job and career; and to Robert Neu of Los Angeles, who suffered an appendicitis attack while carpooling, then fell in love with and married a fellow carpooler.

Rounding out the top honors was fourth-place winner Amy Walker of Dana Point for her tale about meeting the man of her dreams while carpooling and how he restored her faith in relationships in general.



blown into the abandoned cabins. Here and there, inside shiny, slightly indented spots on deck, a flattened leaf inside a shadow-thin puddle of ice.

The crew members who'll have lowered the ladder and then met him up on deck, after the Ship Visitor has called up from the pier, will strike him, on first impression, as strangely incurious, or maybe just shy, or totally lost in benumbed stupors. Smoky-smelling, black-smudged khaki blankets tugged over torn and stained clothing, a few hard-eyed stares, others vacant, dazed. Almost mutely they'll follow the Ship Visitor as he strides the ripped-up deck, inspecting as a ship visitor must while futilely bantering away in banal Spanish, the situation already explicit, appalling. Central Americans. Young. Practically boys! Just a bunch of filthy fate-stunned boys! They won't smile, won't laugh at anything he says. And they'll seem to be losing their footing, almost falling down, with every step they take on the ice-sheened, dangerously ripped-apart deck, not even the calcareous ridges of frozen gull-drop-pings everywhere providing traction. Torn colorless sneakers, a few cheap work boots, ragged loafers with thin hard soles. Almost obstinately, humorlessly, no bemused or even embarrassed smiles, they'll be slipping and sliding all over the place as if, in some show of belated or purposeless pride, they refuse to adjust their manner of walking for ice, twisting their feet sideways like skaters into chocks. He'll find the rest of the crew still sleeping or lying awake in hunched postures under blankets on the floor of the rust- and smoke-darkened mess, skin showing through rips in blackened socks.

Later that morning the Ship Visitor will drive his van off the pier and into Brooklyn to do some quick shopping for the crew: food, heavy-duty plastic sheeting to put over the open portholes and doorway to the mess, and six packages of tube socks. And then he'll spend the rest of the day on board, listening, huddled with them in the frigid mess and then around a small wood fire on deck until the daylong wintry dusk finally begins to darken to night. He'll politely decline their offer to stay for dinner. And then the gold-toothed kid will make a ceremonious little speech, thanking him, "our estimable new friend," for the pork chops and peas and Coca-Colas and plastic sheeting and socks. And all but a few of the crew will stand and look at the Ship Visitor with solemn expressions, briefly but intensely applauding. The Ship Visitor will have been spending his days, five days a week, amidst men and boys more or less

like these, if not always as fucked over: men and boys, also women and girls, from the poor continents, on the move, crewing ships that sail all the world's oceans and seas and that occasionally stop at this great port. But he'll still feel touched and surprised, a little disturbed, by the earnest solemnity of that round of applause.

**T**he day before yesterday it will have been the suicidal Filipina cruise-liner laundress threatening to guzzle a bottle of Clorox, hysterically repeating over and over that she has a high school degree, that she's a singer, that she'd been hired as a shipboard entertainer and then they put her in the laundry! Some kind of sexual harassment apparently going on, too. Of course, the cruise liner will have been sailing to the Caribbean that very evening, usual story. No time to really be of help, to really do anything but coax the bottle of Clorox away and calm her a little, then go back to the office and log it. Phone ahead in the next few days to the chaplaincy or seamen's center in the liner's next port of call to ask them to look in on her, if they can. Hope she didn't just take a nighttime dive off the deck—happens, and no one ever knows or cares. Anonymous as mice.

He'll have spent yesterday in a Port Newark hospital, sitting by the bed of a recuperating Colombian stowaway—the man and three friends had hidden themselves inside a coffee-sack-stuffed container loaded onto a ship sailing from Buenaventura. So when the customs inspectors and the DEA guy opened the container down on the pier, this skinny kid in just his underwear popped out and took off running. The Ship Visitor had been up on deck with the crew when, amidst the clanging commotion of cranes and hoisted containers, he sensed a change in pitch of the stevedores' shouts. He went to the rail and saw customs officials and stevedores jogging in the direction of a nearly naked brown body pinioned as if by wind against the hurricane fence, and others gathered around the open end of a container, holding their hands over their noses and mouths, some reluctantly clambering inside, lifting out the first of the contorted, twisted bodies. Left the other two inside, for the ambulance drivers to deal with. Three dead from suffocating heat, hunger, and dehydration, hunched and sprawled amidst the coffee-bean-stuffed sacks, stiff with rigor mortis; one survivor with enough energy left to take off in a wild sprint at the first splash of air and daylight...

And end up lying in a hospital with IVs pumping saline solutions into him and looking





*This photograph, by Eli Reichman, was taken at the Broadway Bridge in Kansas City, Missouri. Reichman's work appeared in the 1996 Communication Arts photography annual. He lives in Mission, Kansas.*

like he couldn't even have lost much weight, no slackness in his face, just a shocked glitter in his eyes. All that just to get to the U.S. of A., and he was going to be deported as soon as he was discharged.

How could the Ship Visitor ask what he wanted to ask? Couldn't, of course. What was it like? What were you all thinking? How did you know when the first one died? Was there a sight, a sound? And then the other two?

He finally asked, How did you not go mad? Left it at that.

**B**y next week he will have met a pair of stowaways from Hong Kong, an old man and his eleven-year-old granddaughter. They'll have been traveling the world on this ship nearly two years already, turned away by the authorities at every port, and the Moroccan crew and Turkish officers, they'll have practically adopted the pair, the old man helping in the galley, the little girl becoming fluent in Arabic. She'll have a pet pigeon—fattest pi-

geon he'll have ever seen, nearly as big as a turkey—keeping it in a cage one of the crew will have made for her from tar-stiffened rope. But the captain will have wanted it resolved, getting worried for the girl, her effect on the crew, this no environment for a little girl on the cusp of puberty: why tempt fate? Will have almost felt like a betrayal, but it had to be done, getting in touch with people from UNESCO, convincing them to get the paperwork done and foot the bill for their repatriation without port authorities fining the ship for bringing in stowaways, no one else was going to do it. Captain Kemal will have even let himself be held over in port six extra hours to see it all through, inviting the Ship Visitor to the going-away dinner, breaking out some not-at-all-bad Moroccan claret. During the dinner the little girl will have stood on her chair and made a deft speech in Arabic, and then sung a song in Cantonese. See what he gets to see? The girl will take the obese pigeon with her, all the way back to Hong Kong.



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# THE JOYS OF GLOBAL INVESTMENT

Shipping home the fruits of misery

By Ted C. Fishman

Last spring, when television hostess Kathie Lee Gifford was accused of endorsing a line of clothing made by thirteen-year-old Honduran girls working twenty-hour days, I found myself hard-pressed to choose which was the more remarkable, the media's ability to transmute celebrity into melodrama or the apparent wish of the American public to rescue Third World workers from an unnatural doom.

Here was Kathie Lee tearfully protesting that she was being unfairly maligned, and then (under the watch of her hastily engaged public-relations consultant) tearfully demanding that something be done for these poor and suffering children. The well-televised image of her husband, Frank Gifford, handing out hundred-dollar bills to stunned laborers in a sweatshop nicely complemented the announcement that his wife had discussed the complexities of the global economy with such worthies as New York governor George Pataki and Secretary of Labor Robert Reich. It was an ugly spectacle, not so much because we glimpsed the dark side of the coin of American celebrity—here was a woman who was paid \$5 million and said that *she didn't know*—but because we saw how, given enough money and earnest cynicism, that coin can be turned back to its bright and proper side. All was more or less forgotten, Kathie Lee's smile continued to sell dishwashing liquid, and the viewers of the scandal were presumably relieved.

But I, for one, think that it was not Kathie Lee Gifford who misjudged the temper of the times but the American media, which arranged for her public flogging. And I'm glad she didn't have to cry for too long, because she was crying for me too—and perhaps for you as well.

The fact is that American investors, large and small, old and young, are, like Kathie Lee, hedging against what they anticipate will be the long-term relative decline of America by investing overseas. The pension and mutual-fund industries have led the exodus of cash, and together with universities, foundations, insurance companies, and private investors, they have

*Ted Fishman's most recent article for Harper's Magazine was "The Bull Market in Fear," which appeared in the September 1995 issue.*



AMERICAN INVESTORS POURED  
A STAGGERING \$40 BILLION INTO  
FOREIGN INVESTMENTS IN THE  
FIRST THREE QUARTERS OF 1996



changed the shape of the world equity markets. From 1980 to 1994, the movement of American money into stocks across borders jumped sixteenfold, to \$1.5 trillion. Even though, as of this writing, the U.S. stock market is up 70 percent over the last two years, with twelve new highs last November alone, the desire for international stocks remains so strong that nearly every American investor owns them—if not outright, then through a mutual fund or pension account. Overseas investments, in fact, account for one out of every eight dollars invested by American mutual funds and pensions. Most of the rise has come within the last three years, and the trend is accelerating. (The state of Connecticut, for example, wagered \$400 million in the first six months of 1996.) Over the next three years, according to the consulting firm of Greenwich Associates, pensions alone will add \$150 billion to their current \$380 billion investment in foreign securities. That's a rousing commitment considering that until recently, U.S. investors showed almost no interest elsewhere in the world.

Not surprisingly, the mutual-fund industry, ever willing to cater to each investment fad, has spawned two new products: global funds, which by mandate can buy stocks anywhere in the world; and international funds, which buy only abroad. By a fluke, my daughter's picture, sitting in a photographer's stock file, ended up last year on the cover of the prospectus for one such vehicle, the Stone Roe International Fund. Here's the message she unknowingly peddles: "Two decades ago, 30 percent of the world's equity investment opportunities were securities based outside the United States. Today that figure has more than doubled, as the economies of other countries continue to improve and develop, the long-term growth potential of global investments will continue to accelerate." When it was started, in 1974, the fund joined a crowded field. In 1984, global and international funds numbered 29; by last October, there were 658 of them. Over that same period, the assets of these funds grew from \$5.2 billion to \$264 billion. Investors poured in \$40 billion in the first three quarters of 1996, much of it pulled out of traditional savings vehicles—bonds, money-market accounts, and mutual funds that invest in large U.S. companies.

The strategy rests on the familiar principle that the safest and most profitable portfolios have the most varied assortment of investments. The trick is to fine-tune the mix of foreign assets so that a portfolio's investments don't all swing from expensive to cheap at the same moment. French stocks, for example, don't follow the thirty Dow Jones Industrials, and Malaysian and Japanese stocks act still more independently.<sup>1</sup> At present institutional investors want foreign stocks to make up as much as 15 percent of their holdings.<sup>2</sup> In managing its portfolio, an institution will shift money around whenever one class of investment outperforms others by a wide margin. This process, known sacredly to money managers as "the readjust," has helped to drive the boom in international investments; b

<sup>1</sup> Discrete investments in foreign stocks can prove harrowing as well as expensive. The booms and busts of the Japanese markets in the late 1980s and the Mexican markets in the early 1990s sobered anyone who played them. Yet, odd as it seems, the most volatile markets make prized additions to big portfolios. For complicated mathematical reasons, volatile foreign stocks act like a kite tail when attached to a larger portfolio. The more that foreign stocks and stock markets flop around, the more they serve to stabilize a diversified portfolio and contribute to its gains.

<sup>2</sup> Consultants who advise large funds put the optimal portion of foreign stocks in an American portfolio at 40 percent. Most funds still lag well behind these figures, but many rich private investors are already there. One consultant who manages only accounts worth \$100 million or more told me that his clients were the most enthusiastic foreign investors. Because they can buy the best information, super-rich investors regularly lead the way with investment choices that mainstream investors will make only much later.



ause the U.S. bull market has run so long, and weightings of U.S. stocks have grown so heavy in institutional portfolios, managers have adjusted their asset mixes and poured money into foreign markets. Individual investors, usually operating less methodically, perform a reverse readjust; when the U.S. stock market dropped last summer, the money flowing into domestic mutual funds slowed dramatically while money into international funds went up. And, even more complicatedly, foreign stocks attract money even when they are performing poorly, as some of the Asian markets have over the last year. The reasoning here is that American bull markets can't run forever. Money then goes to markets that look depressed but are poised for a bull run of their own. A headline in the "Forecast 1997" issue of *Money* magazine played to this one-two punch of greed and fear, urging readers to bail out of U.S. stocks and into overseas winners: "Earn 20% Investing Abroad: Here's why foreign shares are poised tolobber U.S. stocks in '97."

As American money pours into foreign markets, they pop up, sometimes literally. Stock exchanges are sprouting in places where they were once unthinkable, from the states of the former Eastern bloc and communist Asia to sub-Saharan Africa, including Uganda and soon, improbably enough, Mozambique. The value of the issues traded on Indonesia's Jakarta Stock Exchange has grown over 1,000 percent in the last five years to \$90 billion, a third of which is in the hands of foreigners, mostly Americans. The internationalization of portfolio investing has fed a swell in the world's pool of exchange-listed securities. By the end of 1995 the total value of the world's equities was \$18 trillion.

Although Americans investing abroad still favor such developed economies as Britain, Germany, Canada, and Japan, the real action is in the stocks of companies in the so-called emerging markets based in thirty-nine developing countries in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and all parts of Asia except Japan.<sup>3</sup> Even financial calamities can't put investors off them for long: the chances for phenomenal returns are too great. In 1993 the average diversified emerging-market fund went up 38 percent. Even down years look good. In 1994, emerging markets overall slipped by 10 percent, dragged down by Mexico's financial crisis, yet in that same year nineteen of the twenty best-performing stock markets worldwide were emerging markets. South African stocks, for example, have outpaced the Dow Jones Industrial Average for the last five years, beating that index by 25 percent. In 1996, Mexican stocks were up 17 percent through early December; Philippine stocks, up 30 percent. Poland did well, too—up 77 percent. And then there was Russia, which despite Boris Yeltsin's heart troubles was up 153 percent.

Where there's collective greed, there's a market. But the same dynamic is true of collective fear. Much of the boom in American investment abroad derives from national and personal anxieties; reading the economic tea leaves, many of us believe that emerging economies threaten our jobs, our lifestyles, our prestige. While they take a piece of us, the logic goes, it's essential for us to stake a piece of them. The advertising copywriters working for the mutual funds have become adept at floating the euphemisms of dread. A press release from the large fund family Scudder, Stevens & Clark: "[I]t's clear that America's Baby Boom generation has developed over the past decade a strong appreciation for the importance of ensuring their future financial security," the release says left-

## THE BOOM IN AMERICAN INVESTMENT ABROAD DERIVES FROM OUR FEAR THAT EMERGING ECONOMIES THREATEN US

<sup>3</sup> The term "emerging market" was coined in 1981 by a World Bank official, Antoine van Agtmael, as a marketing ploy to de-stigmatize the Third World. Van Agtmael, implementing an initiative of then World Bank president Robert McNamara, helped launch stock exchanges in developing countries. The case he popularized for emerging markets is the flip side of the widespread American anxiety over globalization: "In the next 25 years," van Agtmael told a trade magazine recently, "I believe that China will do to Japan what the U.S. did to Great Britain in the last century."



THE WORLD BANK ESTIMATES  
THAT CHINA WILL OVERTAKE THE  
UNITED STATES AS THE WORLD'S  
LARGEST ECONOMY BY 2020

handedly about the demographic group with the infamously low saving rate, "but to prepare prudently . . . they may wish to consider broadening their horizons, literally, given market conditions and expected developments both domestically and internationally."

My outlook is less abstract and more openly selfish: it involves my eight-year-old daughter and five-year-old son. Around them our household whispers for better returns—so that they may have a new computer, so that they may go to college, so that my wife and I are not a burden after we retire. In my view, my children live in a mature economy hamstrung by too many old people, ill-educated young people, and social problems that the government can't find the will to fix. When our economy, or the economies of Western Europe, grows 3 percent, economists call it a banner year, yet emerging markets are expected to have long-term growth rates surpassing 6 percent. Time, I believe, is running against my country.

In fact, the economic output of the developing world will soon outstrip that of developed countries and by the turn of the century will account for over 60 percent of everything the world produces. The hotly hyped promise of China is particularly fetching: its rate of growth has fluctuated between 4 percent and 14 percent over the last decade; the World Bank estimates that China will overtake the United States as the world's largest economy by the year 2020, just when my children are in the full swing of their working years. Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea will rank higher than Great Britain. To be able to compete internationally, my children must be expensively prepared.<sup>4</sup> With luck, private schools and top universities can provide my kids with skills that good students in Korea and India learn for free—or what will look free to me after I've sunk hundreds of thousands of dollars into my family's human capital over the course of the next twenty years. To make it that far, I'm betting a steady portion of my First World earnings will go to that Third World laborer who is going to work like hell.

**T**he hope that one's money might scour the globe for fortunes is new, of course. For better and for worse, civilization as we know it in the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, and much of the Far East derives from the mercantile energies of sixteenth-century Europe. The British East India Company, chartered by Elizabeth I in 1600, eventually grasped an entire subcontinent. But it was not until this century that electrical, and then electronic, technology dramatically increased the flexibility of overseas investing. John Maynard Keynes wrote prophetically in 1919 that merely by using the telephone a man could "adventure his wealth in the natural resources and new enterprises of any quarter of the world, and share without exertion or even trouble, in their prospective fruits and advantages; or he could decide to couple the security of his fortunes with the good faith of the towns people in any substantial municipality in any continent that fancy or information might recommend."

Yet the ability to move capital internationally also requires political cooperation. The world had a chance at a truly global securities market before World War I, when colonial powers could still impose their market systems on their foreign subjects, but that possibility was snuffed out by the combined forces of regional and world wars, depression, and the spread of socialism, nationalism, and protectionism. The movement of investment capital from the United States and other developed countries to the rest of the world took the form of grants and loans, either from governments, big multilateral lenders such as the World Bank, or private banks. But after the failure of this paradigm, when the state-directed economies of Latin America suffered a debt crisis and banks curtailed

<sup>4</sup> A recent report augurs poorly for the United States. In math, Singapore students ranked first, scoring 643 on a standardized test. U.S. students scored 500, which ranked twenty-eighth globally.



their lending in the developing world, and after the collapse of Communism, liberal market economics was embraced as the only hope that poorer countries had to lure capital across their borders. Invest in developing countries, the thinking went, and the tide of money wrought by cheap, brutalized labor eventually would lift all boats and bring democracy. This theory, dubbed "the development model," argues that open capital markets have liberalizing effects on repressive regimes because investors demand reliable information on topics that ruling cliques like to keep quiet about. Investors also demand that the rule of law be respected, giving them assurance that disputes will be resolved fairly. As a result, the theory goes, political systems open up, because information flows more freely and people have more recourse to the law.

The rush to market we see today sprang from the adoption of the development model by the "Washington consensus," a term economist Paul Krugman defines as "not only the U.S. government, but all those institutions and networks of opinion leaders centered in the world's de facto capital—the international Monetary Fund, World Bank, think tanks, politically sophisticated investment bankers, and worldly finance ministers, all those who meet each other in Washington and collectively define the conventional wisdom of the moment." Since 1990, central fiscal powers have administered free market medicine to one economy after another, always with the same prescription: open up trade, sell off state-owned companies, and discipline government spending. "Find a country that has done these things," writes Krugman, reporting the sentiment, "and there one may confidently expect to realize high returns on investments. . . . The question was not whether optimistic expectations about growth in the big emerging markets would be fulfilled; it was whether advanced countries would be able to cope with the new competition and take advantage of the opportunities this growth now offered."

That question has been answered. Hints that a country is reforming its tax code, privatizing its phone company, balancing its budget, or consuming more beer send money rushing in. So-called macro-investors bet on entire countries the same way other investors do on hot domestic stocks. A trader for one large firm told me that he looked at "200 data points a day" to figure out which way the world was going and how much money should follow. Individual investors now play the same game. Want to take a flier on the economies of China or India or Africa? Securities traded on U.S. stock exchanges make it possible. Dozens of country funds, such as the China Fund, the India Fund, and the Simba Fund, invest in a broad spectrum of stocks meant to represent the collective fortunes of the markets they cover. For those keen on a larger approach, index funds let one hold every major stock in a geopolitical market. A phone call to the Vanguard International Equity Index Fund-Pacific Portfolio, for instance, will deliver a piece of nearly five hundred Pacific Rim companies.

**R**emembering the uproar over Kathie Lee Gifford's Honduran girls, what do I know about my foreign portfolio, which is comprised of parts of twelve funds? Am I aware of all of my companies' labor or environmental practices? Am I aware of the social conditions in each country? Is the development model working in these places? Do I worry about what progress is being made? In a word, no. It's too much work to figure out how the funds I'm invested in have used my money; a quick look at the funds' annual reports shows that I own a piece of over 1,000 foreign companies in dozens of countries. I do know that I own shares in one of the fifteen or so funds that have a big stake in Daewoo and in two of the hundred-odd funds partial to Samsung. Both companies, among the world's

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DO I CARE THAT I AM INVESTING  
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GLAD. WHAT COULD BE BETTER  
FOR MY GET-RICH STRATEGY?



largest, make or sell everything from semiconductors to lumber to insurance. Other big Korean conglomerates, called *chaebols*, are well represented, too. That's good. *Chaebols* control a huge portion of Korea's economy, with banks, government, and corporations combined so intricately that outsiders have little chance of learning how the influence and assets intertwine. For funds, the best bet is just to buy all the conglomerates and banks around, and that way get a piece of almost everything Korea is up to. As an investor, then, I am partners with the thirty families that control the Korean economy. These families are close to the country's former dictators, and our collective profits historically derive from a steady flow of government money (lured by hundred-million-dollar bribes), economic discrimination against competitors, and a police state that has brutalized Korean workers and enforced miserable working conditions.

Do I care that I am investing in tyranny, authoritarianism, and latte-day feudalism? Absolutely. I'm glad. What could be better for my get-rich-in-Asia strategy? To be perfectly honest, the fact that Korea is progressing socially at all unsettles me. Koreans tolerate corruption less and less these days, and workers organize more freely and earn higher wages. These changes fulfill the promises of the development model that Wall Street, Washington, and the international banks tout publicly, but also mean that doing business at home is tougher for Korean conglomerates, especially for those that built their market share on cheap exports.

Yet, as it turns out, conglomerates haven't lost their ability to exploit cheap workers; they've just exported that too. Officials at the U.S. Trade Representative's office, human rights groups, and labor unions shudder when asked about Korea's foreign plants, now spread everywhere in the developing world. The practices at plants in Central and South America are the best documented, though hired security forces, cooperative police, and razor wire do a good job of keeping outsiders beyond the gates. The Korean government has tallied over two hundred Korean factories in the region, though it admits that many more exist. Most are assembly plants for Korea's garment industry; some assemble consumer electronics. Korean factories account for half of the clothing industry in both Guatemala and Honduras. In the Americas, Koreans can take advantage of free-trade privileges, dirt-cheap wages (as low as 11 cents an hour), and a near-total absence of unions.

The Kathie Lee Gifford episode shed some light on how these companies are returning value to people such as myself and their shareholders:<sup>5</sup> the hires are mostly girls in their mid-teens, delivered to work on school buses. They presumably make ideal stitchers because they are at the peak of their manual dexterity. And they are easily managed, right down to their reproductive systems. Some plants pass out birth control pills daily but tell workers that they are vitamins. Given this atmosphere of coercion and threat, it's little wonder that labor-rights reports claim incidents of rape as well.

Thus does my money chase human misery. Although I don't know for certain which companies I own conduct business in this manner, Samsung and Daewoo do have garment plants in Latin America, and I take it on faith that either they or some other Korean company I hold is reaping

<sup>5</sup> Investors interested in which countries might be the most lucrative should have a look at "Child Labour: Targeting the Intolerable," a report just published by the International Labour Conference. In it one can glean not only that 250 million children between the ages of five and fourteen in developing countries work full- or part-time but that 61 per cent of them are in Asia, and that much of their labor includes exposure to pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, heavy loads, extreme temperatures, explosives, radioactive substances, industrial machinery, ear-splitting noise, poor lighting, benzene, asbestos, carbon monoxide, flying glass, slavery, etc.



the advantages of doing business there. I have tied my children's futures not only to rising Asia but to the backs of young girls working for a few dimes an hour. It's all good news for my portfolio, since my Korean holdings vested in Latin America bring me the residual diversification<sup>6</sup> needed to put me in the middle of the two most dynamic trends in the global economy: the drive toward the top in Asian industrialization, and the drive toward the bottom in low-tech manufacturing.

The bottom, however, may turn out to be what I need most. Low wages and tough working conditions are nothing new in the garment industry, but now they are just as possible in more demanding high-tech fields. Girls with four years of school can now assemble sophisticated consumer electronics and computers as easily as they can Pocahontas pajamas. Automated manufacturing has shrunk the lag between the moment a product is state-of-the-art and when it is a low-tech commodity. Cheap workers are a necessary competitive advantage sooner in the life cycle of manufactured goods than ever before. In the life cycle of services, too. American multinationals farm out data processing to Third World workers who can't read English, and the programming of complex computer code, once handled by the graduates of American computer-science departments, is extracted on the cheap in Bangalore and Moscow. The companies that can push workers hardest win the drive to the bottom, and with the right stocks I will participate, I will win.<sup>7</sup>

How fascinating, incidentally, that some of the burgeoning foreign stock funds actually end up investing in the United States. Formosa Plastics, a large Taiwanese chemical company, has long taken full advantage of Taiwan's hospitality toward polluters. The country's ruined landscape and toxic waters owe much to the plastics industry, in which Formosa Plastics ranks as the world's largest manufacturer of polyvinyl chloride. According to the latest study by the Council on Economic Priorities, Formosa Plastics U.S.A. is the largest producer of hazardous waste among America's mid-sized chemical companies and has, thankfully for its stockholders, declined to participate in the chemical industry's voluntary waste-reduction program. Formosa is an attractive investment, and I'm glad that five funds can put the company in my portfolio.

Another investment that interests me is the DFA Pacific Rim Small Company Fund, which owns roughly a thousand stocks screened by a mathematical formula. It has a nice historical return. One of the companies that fits the fund's criteria is Poly Technologies, a mainland Chinese company owned largely by the Chinese military. Last June, the U.S. Department of Justice charged Poly Technologies with attempting to smuggle two thousand AK-47s into the United States; the company is one of China's largest arms dealers and at the time was run by Deng Xiaoping's son-in-law. The military is pushing hard into mainstream business in China, and I'm glad, because stability, as everyone knows, is good for business, and who better to enforce it than an army that runs the economy? Next time Chinese soldiers bulldoze pro-democracy protesters, my family will benefit.

**T**here's more good news for me. Although the development model foretells that democracy will blossom in countries that open up their capital

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<sup>6</sup> Speaking of diversification, I'm very bullish (and I mean it) on the companies that have bought up 8.6 million acres in the Brazilian Amazon. Future agreements are expected to raise that figure to 22.2 million, which will constitute 15 percent of the harvestable rain forest.

<sup>7</sup> To Yang Ming Marine, the drive to the bottom means something else entirely. Yang Ming owns the ship that pulled into Halifax minus three stowaways last May. The captain had them thrown overboard in the middle of the ocean to spare his company the \$5,000-per-head fine the Canadian government imposes on ships with unregistered passengers. If the managers of my funds ever start looking at anything other than returns, I might not find myself with companies like Yang Ming in my portfolio. But for now, I can still own one of the six international funds that have a nice piece of Yang Ming.



HERE'S A TIP YOU CAN'T GET  
MUCH BETTER THAN FORCED  
LABOR, AND THAT'S WHAT  
INVESTMENT IN BURMA DELIVERS

markets, public stock offerings have proven very useful to entrench regimes. In Indonesia, a small circle of interests around the family of President Suharto controls a vast proportion of the country's wealth. Jeffrey Winters of Northwestern University has estimated the Suharto family wealth at over \$30 billion, with another \$30 billion held by fifty close allies. Pick any major business—telecommunications, construction, banking, food, heavy manufacturing, McDonald's—and Suharto's circle has control. The burgeoning of the Jakarta Stock Exchange, says Winters, is a part of the ruling group's deliberate strategy to sell off a significant portion of its holdings to investors in the developed world, thus making them partners in the present order as well as defenders of my interests, should unrest threaten the status quo. For investors like me, partnership with the Indonesian government carries real advantages: a union-busting military (which often quashes strikes in the Suharto family's factories); pieces of highly profitable government-protected monopolies; and the assurance that my partners will go to almost any length to promote a stable business environment (e.g., not close down newspapers, suppress political parties, and call out the troops).

Although the Washington consensus still pays lip service to the liberating power of foreign capital, many of the emerging-market countries seem to be making sure that profits are the only thing growing more liberally. The ruling elites in each country are adept at making sure that democratic and employee-stock-ownership plans aren't going to arrive anytime soon. In Asia and Latin America, special economic zones for foreign investors are set up so that governments can forgo reforming their corrupt, lucrative bureaucracies. They establish separate court systems to hear the complaints of businesses and reserve the old justice systems to handle business as usual. New information channels, such as online news services and international magazines, are made available on a limited basis to government officials and approved businesspeople, but popular media remain under strict control. At the same time that Indonesia was ramping up openness to the Internet, the government closed down two leading newsmagazines, the country's equivalent of *Time* and *Newsweek*. In Singapore, the print editions of most Western news organizations are banned or strictly censored, yet privileged business and government officials may receive them. In the Caribbean Basin, workers are beaten nearly to death for the mere possession of labor pamphlets. In fact, everywhere my money goes, capitalist markets have widened the gap between rich and poor. As markets go up, the wealth of those with assets multiplies, while low-wage earners stay stuck where they are. If they make progress, and threaten to price their local economies out of the cheap-labor market, their governments devalue the local currency.

If liberalization does, by some chance, take hold in a country, I can always diversify elsewhere and get ever-cheaper labor. Here's a tip: You can get much better than forced labor, and that's what investments in some companies doing business in Burma deliver. The country still doesn't have its own stock market, but it has alluring business ventures, such as the gas pipeline running across the country from the Andaman Sea into Thailand. The venture unites state-owned Myanma Oil & Gas with Unocal, the U.S. oil company; Total, the big French petroleum giant; and Thailand PTT Exploration & Production—three companies that appear frequently in global and international mutual funds, including those in the two largest fund families, Fidelity and Vanguard. PTT Exploration, which is partially state-owned, shows up in one of the Scudder funds recommended for U.S. baby boomers. To save money on the billion-dollar enterprise, the Myanmar military, according to the U.S. State Department and human rights groups, has employed tens of thousands of conscripted workers, including old men and pregnant women, and forced them at gunpoint to clear land and build railway parallel to the pipeline. The companies deny using forced labor, but I hope they are lying, because I like to think that those conscripted workers are cutting the path of my American future.



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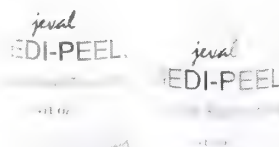
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# AN ARMY OF ONE'S OWN

In Africa, nations hire a corporation to wage war

By Elizabeth Rubin

EBen Barlow lives and works on a quiet, tree-lined side street in a wealthy suburb of Pretoria, the city that was once the headquarters of South Africa's apartheid military establishment. Set back behind well-tended grounds and a swimming pool, guarded by surveillance cameras and two stone lions at the portico, Barlow's stately mock-tudor villa could easily belong to a corporate executive in Greenwich, Connecticut. The living room decor would make Martha Stewart proud: heavy-nubbed silk drapes and matching rose-colored leather and brocade love seats, couches, and wing chairs. As Barlow pours coffee into fine china, it is easy to forget that he was once a commander of the notorious 32 Battalion of the South African special forces, but there are several clues scattered about: a small library of spy novels, a collection of battle histories, and the oversized *World Encyclopedia of Organized Crime*, by Jay Robert Nash, which sits propped up between two golden swans on the lacquered coffee table.

Everything is elegant, orderly, and civil, including the corporate brochure Barlow hands to his guests upon arrival. It's a glossy black portfolio with multicolor graphics that describe

the confidential "advisory," "training," and "equipment" services his company, Executive Outcomes, provides: Clandestine Warfare, Combat Air Patrol, Armored Warfare, Basic and Advanced Battle Handling, and Sniper Training. The corporation, the brochure says, prides itself on its flawless and unequalled success record, on its above-average growth rate, and on the five thousand man-years of combat experience of its workforce—all former elite commandos of the apartheid regime. Barlow's company declares that it is one of the largest businesses of its kind in the world, but that is an easy boast. It is, so far, the only incorporated private mercenary army on earth that will contract to move in and wage full-scale war on behalf of its client.

I visited Barlow at his villa last June. He is a trim, spry, forty-year-old, unassuming in his navy blazer and soft blue Oxford shirt, the perfect P.R. man for Executive Outcomes—reasonable, cool, smooth-talking, and solicitous. In Afrikaans, the word for chameleon is *verkleurmannetjie*, "changing-color man," and it describes Barlow well. A fair-haired man with one green and one blue eye whose drawn, weathered face reveals not a flicker of emotion, Barlow has perfected the art of adaptive coloration over the years. After fighting in South Africa's border wars in the 1970s, Barlow

moved into intelligence and became an agent in the Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB), the innocuous named covert assassination and espionage unit formed by South Africa's military intelligence to target and eliminate enemies of the white minority-ruled state. The CCB sent Barlow to Western Europe, where his tasks purportedly included spreading disinformation about Nelson Mandela's African National Congress and setting up front companies to evade sanctions and sell South African weapons abroad. By the time the CCB death squads were exposed in 1990 under President F. W. de Klerk, Barlow had already established Executive Outcomes as a counterintelligence consultancy, number one among his clients not only his former employer, the South African Defence Forces, but also the De Beers diamond cartel. He had positioned himself to turn the political change in South Africa into an economic boon. But it wasn't enough. "We have our dreams," Barlow said, perched at the edge of his rose settee. "Mine was to be the best and biggest military consultancy in the world."

Barlow chose for his company logo the paladin, the same chessboard knight once featured in the old TV series *Have Gun, Will Travel*, because he said, "I liked the way it moves on the world board." But he bristles at the word "mercenary." He prefers

Special thanks to contributors, including  
for the photo of Barlow at the top of Harper's  
magazine, and to the author of the article  
in the magazine, 1996.



view Executive Outcomes as a team of corporate troubleshooters, marketing a strategy of recovery to failing governments around the world (though nearly all its jobs, so far, have been in Africa). In exchange for millions of dollars, the company offers to do what the United Nations blue helmets cannot and will not do: take sides, deploy overwhelming force, and fire "preemptively" on its contractually designated enemy.

Barlow imagines E.O. as a kind of advance team for the U.N. "You cannot keep peace if there is no peace, as we saw in Bosnia," he said.

But we can help a country to achieve some form of stability before the U.N. comes in." Executive Outcomes' first priority, however, is business.

The war machine is only one part of a growing empire of companies specializing in the lucrative mineral harvests of high-risk environments—gold, oil, and gems. African governments often have cash-flow problems, Barlow explained. By working in resource-rich countries, he and his board members can rest assured

that the company will always get paid. "Africa is Africa, understand," he said, "and we don't work for free."

**B**efore meeting with Barlow, I had spent several weeks in Sierra Leone, a recent client and proud "success story" of Executive Outcomes. In 1991, a brutal civil war engulfed Sierra Leone, a small country on the west coast of Africa, and as rebels and soldiers battled one another, they also waged a campaign of terror against civilians. No one—not the United Nations, not the Organization of African Unity, not the international-conflict-resolution experts who filled up the abandoned tourist hotels in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital—was able to bring the fighting under control. Then in

May 1995, Executive Outcomes landed on the scene, promising to restore law and order in exchange for \$15 million and a share of the country's coveted diamond mines.

For the first few weeks of my visit I stayed in Freetown, where Executive Outcomes was firmly ensconced in the headquarters of the national military, a bizarre, Chinese-built structure, shaped like a Buddhist temple, with an expansive view of the city's palm-studded, powdery Atlantic beaches. During E.O.'s campaign,

the shapes of men, and the craters emerged as mining pits, some long abandoned, some still active, dug with shovels by thousands of Sierra Leonians chasing after diamonds.

It had been ten months since the South Africans captured the region, and some five hundred thousand

people had flocked in behind them, hoping to get rich off the diamond-filled soil. All along the potted red-dirt road that wound in from the airstrip to Koidu, the commercial center of Kono, hundreds of bare-chested men and boys were digging under the

scorching equatorial sun. They shoveled outside a bombed-out police station, through the floors of mud huts, among the ruins of torched and looted stone houses, in the shadows of the towering mosques, in pits and dunes to the horizons. Boys, hunched over handmade sieves, spun and sifted the heavy earth, wading in the murky water at the bottom of the pits. At the compound of the bankrupt National Diamond Mining Corporation, men were excavating in the old swimming pool, the tennis courts, and the golf

course. But it wasn't all pick, shovel, and pan. A cacophony of groaning, slurping, hissing, and rumbling rose from Caterpillar bulldozers, dredges, and pumps along the riverbeds, where foreign investors were running industrial-diamond operations, gambling on the security provided by Executive Outcomes.

Koidu looked and smelled like a battered frontier town of the American West. Red dust clung to everything, seeping into your eyes and nose. But commerce was in full swing again. Tailors, barbers, and music vendors blaring Bob Marley had set up shops in corrugated metal and wood shanties cobbled together between the prairie-style buildings. Outside the recently whitewashed homes of the Lebanese, who had settled in Sierra Leone at the turn of



however, much of the company's military might had been focused in Kono, the rich diamond-mining province some two hundred miles to the east, and I wanted to see what E.O. had accomplished out there. Ambushes were still common on the roads leading to the country's interior, so I flew out on a Lebanese-owned, Russian-piloted charter. The plane passed for nearly an hour over densely forested hills, and then, as the valleys spread out below, I could see sunlight bouncing off hundreds of shallow mud pools, clustered along the riverbeds and ringed by sand dunes. It seemed as if a terrible scourge had scarred the land with thermal ulcers. As the plane dropped lower over collapsed and burned-out shanties, the tiny specks moving in and around the ulcers resolved into



the century and long ago cornered the stone trade in Koidu, large signs announcing the names of diamond buyers hung over paintings of cartoonishly sparkling diamonds—the bush version of Manhattan's Forty-seventh Street. Coaxers, whose job is to lure passing miners to the buyers, loitered on the verandas.

Nearly everyone I met seemed eager to tell me that the renewed energy and industry I saw all around was thanks entirely to the South Africans. A delegation of Kono's paramount chiefs had just returned from Freetown, where they had been urging the newly elected civilian president, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, to renew Executive Outcomes' estimated \$1.8-million-a-month contract. Chief Konneh Bondo, who led the delegation, recounted his pitch for me as we sat in the shade of his cool stone porch. "We know it's expensive, but you cannot compare that to life," he said. "I told the president that we are all ready to move out if the South Africans, who are also sacrificing their lives here, pull out." And he meant everyone—right down to the street vendors selling cigarettes and plastic baggies of gin out of suitcases, the women selling mangos and ground nuts piled high on their heads, and the man at the market who sat all day on a tree-trunk stool, making and selling mining tools. Many felt so indebted to the soldiers of Executive Outcomes, whom they rather fantastically imagined had come in a gesture of pan-African generosity, that they prayed for them at mosque. The South African mercenaries, camped on a nearby hilltop overlooking Koidu, were unreservedly hailed by the chiefs, the businessmen, and the street people as saviors.

When I was in Freetown, there were always a few freighters anchored offshore. One belonged to De Beers, the diamond cartel founded by Cecil Rhodes during the British colonial era. The other belonged to Executive Outcomes. The ships were emblematic of Sierra Leone's plight, past and present. Although the political frame-

work of colonialism was unraveled at independence in 1961, it left in its place a fragile nation-state still wholly dependent on foreign ballast.

Sierra Leone, once a key port in the West African slave trade, became known in the nineteenth century, when it was under British rule,

## MANY IN KONO FELT SO INDEBTED TO THE SOLDIERS OF EXECUTIVE OUTCOMES THAT THEY PRAYED FOR THEM AT MOSQUE

as both a colony for freed slaves (Britain's equivalent of Liberia) and the "Athens of West Africa" (for its highly acclaimed university). Since the British withdrawal in 1961, however, Sierra Leone's history has read like a study in local political corruption and ill-conceived foreign economic reforms. Siaka Stevens, a charismatic trade unionist, took over where the colonialists left off, and from 1968 to 1985 he ruled over a one-party state, creating a kleptocracy whose main objective was to loot the land. In partnership with European and Lebanese financiers, Stevens and his coterie engorged themselves on the country's vast natural resources, while the rest of the nation slid to the bottom of the U.N. charts rating human misery around the world.

By 1985, when Stevens stepped down and named as his successor Major-General Joseph Momoh, the head of his impotent army, the nation's civil service, health, education, transportation, and communications systems had completely collapsed. Momoh—whom Sierra Leonians nicknamed Dandogo, meaning "the Idiot"—did little to improve matters. Under his leadership the nation's inflation rate rose to the highest in Africa; the treasury went bankrupt; gasoline, electricity, and even printed money disappeared; literacy was down to 21 percent; and average life expectancy fell to about age forty.

In 1991, Foday Sankoh, a disgruntled former Sierra Leonian army officer and a protégé of Liberian warlord

Charles Taylor, led an assault from Liberia into Sierra Leone's diamond-rich eastern region with his Revolutionary United Front (RUF), made up of both Liberian and Sierra Leonian fighters. Sankoh was ostensibly aiming to stir up a grass-roots revolution to topple the old regime, and his singularly cruel, charismatic rebellion made rapid advance against the ragtag national army. Unwilling farmers were press-ganged into his army or intimidated by his trademark tactics: cutting off hands, arms, ears, and genitalia; gouging out eyeballs and eating the organs of victims.

Then in April 1992, Valentin Strasser, a twenty-eight-year-old army captain, stormed the State House in Freetown with several other young soldiers who had been fighting without pay, supplies, medical support, or political motivation. They had come to demand their salaries and stage a protest, but President Momoh, fearing a coup, panicked and fled to neighboring Guinea, leaving the State House empty. So Strasser did declare a coup; he went on the radio and proclaimed an end to misrule and corruption. Ecstatic Sierra Leonians danced in the streets. Even after Strasser's junta hacked twenty-two alleged plotters of a countercoup to death on a Freetown beach, crowds still cheered for the new regime.

But Strasser and his National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) soon forgot about their youthful revolution. Suddenly, they had unimpeded access to the diamond fields to BMWs and Mercedes, and to Siaka Stevens's old presidential palace, which the NPRC boys turned into a private disco where they danced, smoked pot, and snorted cocaine through the night. They also seemed to have forgotten that they were at war. As Foday Sankoh's rebellion pressed on, Strasser bumped up his army from a force of three thousand to about ten thousand by rounding up street kids and criminals.

Now armed, Sierra Leone's disenfranchised exploited the war to realize riches they'd always been denied. Gangs of soldiers, rebels, and even



the two sides in collaboration went on looting sprees, ambushing convoys, plundering diamond mines, stealing supplies, and setting up random roadblocks. When the civilians figured out that their attackers were not only rebels but also government soldiers gone foul, they took to calling anyone in uniform a "sobel"—soldiers who took the guise of rebels to pillage, rape, maim, and murder. There were no coherent front lines, no political causes, and for the terrorized public no place was safe. What began as a civil war had become civil chaos.

By 1995, four years after Ankoh's campaign began, rebels and renegade soldiers had overrun Sierra Leone's diamond, bauxite, and titanium dioxide mines—the three main sources of foreign revenue; locals and expatriates had been taken hostage; foreign investors had pulled out; tens of thousands of people had been maimed or killed; and one quarter of the 4.5 million were living in overcrowded refugee camps.

Strasser had heard about Executive Outcomes from articles in *Newsweek* and *Soldier of Fortune* recounting the company's successful exploits in Angola a year earlier. But it was the British directors of Heritage Oil & Gas, an oil firm that had brought E.O. into Angola, and Branch Energy, a mining firm with interests in Sierra Leone and contacts within the presidential palace, who encouraged Strasser to hire Barlow's army. (The directors of the Heritage-Branch group and E.O. have managed to cloud the exact nature of their relationship behind a web of interlocking companies whose ownership is difficult to trace. Even Heritage-Branch officials have had hard time keeping the story straight: they claim that there's no corporate link but constantly refer to E.O. in conversation as "we.")

By the end of April 1995, as the rebels closed in on Freetown, Strasser made the call to E.O. A deal was struck, and a contract was quickly

drawn up and signed by Strasser and the founder of Heritage and Branch, an English entrepreneur named Anthony Buckingham. Executive Outcomes pledged in the contract to deliver the following services: to combat and destroy the "terrorist enemies of the state"; to restore internal security; and to help build and maintain an economic climate where new investment could be attracted and allowed to flourish. Strasser couldn't pay E.O.'s \$15 mil-

The force came equipped with two MI17s and an MI24 Hind—Russian helicopter gunships similar to American Apaches—a radio intercept system, two Boeing 727s to transport troops and supplies, an Andover casualty-evacuation aircraft, and fuel-air explosives, bombs that suck out oxygen upon detonation, killing all life within a square-mile radius. The men were outfitted in Sierra Leonian uniforms and supplied by the Sierra Leonian military with three armored



EXECUTIVE OUTCOMES SOLDIERS ARRIVE IN KONO

lion fee, so Buckingham agreed to bankroll the operation in exchange for future mining revenues. By May E.O. had deployed its first 170 men.

**T**he Executive Outcomes fighters were mostly black Angolans and Namibians from Barlow's old 32 Battalion, with an officer corps of white South Africans and a white Rhodesian brigadier: a collection of former spies, assassins, and crack bush guerrillas, most of whom had served for fifteen to twenty years in South Africa's most notorious counterinsurgency units. The soldiers were paid between \$2,000 and \$7,000 a month. Many were airlifted straight out of Angola, where E.O. was still active. No passports were stamped, no customs procedures needed.

personnel carriers fitted with 30-mm cannons and six Land Rovers mounted with anti-aircraft guns, as well as ammunition, artillery, and Kalashnikovs. Once in country, they set about training an elite corps of Sierra Leonian soldiers, and they employed traditional Sierra Leonian hunters, known as Kammah Joes—a witchcraft battalion armed with old single-barrel muskets, special herbal potions, and supernatural war garments believed to repel bullets—as scouts in the unfamiliar jungle.

Arthur Walker and Carl Alberts, two of South Africa's most highly decorated air force pilots, who had been lured away from the South African army in 1993 by E.O.'s salaries (about \$6,000 a month), paired up to fly air strikes that would flush the rebels from the dense bush



outside of Freetown. Before each mission, Arthur and Carl would flip a coin to see who got the more exciting job of manning the guns—four-barreled 12.7-mm Gatlings tucked under the chopper's turret. When the pilots told the Sierra Leone military commander that they were having difficulty distinguishing between the rebels and civilians camped under the impenetrable canopy of vines and trees, the reply was, "Kill everybody." So they did.

Executive Outcomes then headed for Kono, to cut off the financial pipeline that Foday Sankoh was using to support his rebel forces. (Throughout the war, rebels and soldiers had collaborated in slipping diamonds out along the decades-old smugglers' trail that winds through the mountainous jungle into Guinea and Liberia.) To camouflage their identity, white soldiers on the ground blackened their faces, and at first Foday Sankoh's rebels didn't know what had hit them. Once Sankoh discovered who was killing so many of his men, he offered a reward to anyone who took a South African hostage or downed one of their helicopters. But the rebels were overwhelmed by E.O.'s superior firepower,

and by the time the South Africans rolled into Koidu in June 1995, the rebels and renegade soldiers had scattered into the hills and all that remained in the town were dogs and vultures feeding off the corpses strewn about the streets.

When news spread of Kono's "liberation" by E.O., thousands of civilians came home from villages to the north and camps in Guinea where they had sought refuge. The E.O. soldiers on the ground in Koidu patrolled all night to keep out unwanted elements, shot or arrested illegal diamond miners, and imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew. The rebels attempted ambushes around the airstrip and along the main road, but Executive Outcomes repelled every incursion with overwhelming force, killing hundreds of rebels, until finally the RUF left Kono alone.

By March of last year, E.O. had secured its key strategic objectives—Freetown, Kono, and the titanium dioxide and bauxite mines—and although several of the company's men had been wounded, only two had been killed, in an ambush. In February and March of 1996, less than a year after E.O.'s first troops landed, the traumatized

Sierra Leonian population lined up at the polls for the first presidential elections in twenty-eight years. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, a career U.N. bureaucrat, won the vote; Strasser's junta retired into well-funded exile; and Sankoh agreed to come out of the bush and negotiate a ceasefire in Ivory Coast. By the time I arrived, in late April, people in Freetown were describing Sierra Leone, which had long been viewed as an intractable disaster, as a West African success story.

Executive Outcomes was happy to take the credit. "E.O.'s a business, and we're in it, of course, for the money," the company's commander, Brigadier Bert Sachse, explained to me when we met at a lawn party at the British high commissioner's residence. "But we also have principles. We agreed to help out the military regime because they promised to move toward elections. Without Executive Outcomes, there would be no democracy here." In fact, it was a powerful grass-roots movement of Sierra Leonian women, professionals, and civil activists that had pushed Strasser and the NPRC to make way for the elections. But it was hard to find anyone to dispute the brigade's claim to victory. As General Ian Douglas, a Canadian negotiator with the U.N., put it, "E.O. gave us the stability. In a perfect world, of course we wouldn't need an organization like E.O., but I'd be loath to say they have to go just because they are mercenaries."

Humanitarian relief workers were not so sanguine about the South Africans. Martha Cardo, an American who worked for Doctors Without Borders, recalled that during the early days of E.O.'s presence in Freetown she had only to see their helicopters flying over her house to know that it was time to rush to the hospital and prepare for an influx of wounded. The pilots, she said, were racist killers with no interest in the country. Like Cardo, the majority of aid workers in Sierra Leone believed that the South Africans' actual mission was to extract and export the country's diamond wealth.

But these voices were the exception, not the rule. Most Sierra Le-





ians I spoke to, as well as foreign diplomats and businessmen in Freetown, seemed to take it for granted that violence had been required to end the violence the population had endured for so long, and that the security of the country rested entirely on E.O.'s shoulders. "They've done a fantastic job," I was told. "They're excellent mercenaries." Rarely, if ever, have "dogs of war" enjoyed such respect.

The country's educated elite were distressed by E.O.'s loss to the treasury and the nation's pride but confessed that they saw no alternative. Our people have died, lost their limbs, lost their eyes and their properties for these elections," Sam Norma, the newly appointed deputy defense minister, said. "If we employ a service to protect our hard-won democracy, why should it be viewed negatively?"

When people spoke about what Executive Outcomes had provided to Sierra Leone, the term that repeatedly arose was not "national defense" but "security," because in the end what had plagued the country was not war but organized banditry. All sides—the rebels, the soldiers, the sobels, and Executive Outcomes—were motivated to kill by greed and, in some cases, tribal and personal vendettas, rather than by any political or nationalistic belief.

It is just this kind of shift in the nature of war, one in which the state no longer has a legal "monopoly over armed violence," that Martin Van Creveld, one of the preeminent war theoreticians of our time, posits will characterize future armed conflicts around the world. In his book *The Transformation of War*, published in 1991, Creveld argues that conventional wars waged by nation-states are fading from the map and that future "war-making entities" will resemble those of the premodern era—tribes, city-states, religious associations, private mercenary bands, and commercial organizations such as the old British East India Company. "As used to be the case until at least 648, military and economic func-

tions will be reunited," Creveld writes. Or to put it more bluntly, individual profit and glory will again become legitimate objectives of war. In such an environment, Creveld predicts, "much of the day-to-day burden of defending society against the threat of low-intensity conflict will be transferred to the booming security business; and indeed the time may come when the organizations that comprise that business

## PRESIDENT KABBAH'S PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP IS NOT WITH HIS PEOPLE BUT WITH A MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION

will, like the *condottieri* of old, take over the state."

Although Executive Outcomes and Branch Energy have not exactly taken over Sierra Leone, E.O. has acted as something of a recolonizing agent for British and South African corporate interests, and despite the millions of International Monetary Fund dollars that have already been diverted to pay E.O., the country still owes the firm millions more. The current arrangement is unsettlingly reminiscent of an older world order reaching back to the days of colonial conquest, when private armies cleared the way for European companies to pursue commercial interests in Africa. Then, the British government would grant charters to colonial mining concerns, such as Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company, whose revenues would, in turn, feed the treasuries back home. So today, President Kabbah's primary partnership is not with the people who elected him but with a multinational corporation, one that secures his power with force and paves the way for other foreign investment to fill the government coffers. Such monies, however, never seem to trickle down to the benefit of the people, particularly those in the provinces, where basic amenities such as electricity, water, roads, and phones barely exist. For Sierra Leonians living outside of Freetown and the diamond regions, who are still the victims of roadside am-

bushes, nighttime attacks, and machete mutilations, President Kabbah, foreign revenues, national defense, and Executive Outcomes can seem like irrelevant abstractions from some other world.

Like Klondike, Kimberley, and all the other towns that have sprung out of the great diamond and gold rushes, Koidu, which grew up in the rush of the 1950s, belongs to no one.

The local Kono tribe was long ago outnumbered by the influx of other Sierra Leonian tribes, along with other West Africans, Lebanese, and Europeans, all wanting a piece of the diamond action. Dreams inspired by the diamond have

drawn so many local farmers to tear into their abundantly fertile land, or to abandon their fields altogether to gamble in the Kono mines, that rice and other staples now have to be imported. In this obsessed, hybrid mining society, the cohesion of Kono's traditional tribal structures was ruptured. Elsewhere in the country, when the secret tribal leagues known as Poro societies realized that the government soldiers had run amok, they declared martial law, fought off the rebels and renegade soldiers, and emerged as an autonomous shadow government to replace the collapsing state apparatus. But in Koidu and the surrounding villages, the people had no such defenders and thus fled en masse when attacked.

The diamond in Kono has always wielded greater authority than the local paramount chief or the state president or the foreign investors. Some people said that the diamond is alive, that it has a fire you can feel. Others said it is the fire of the devil. The people in Kono pray at mosque and at church to find the big stone. They sacrifice goats and red cocks and lambs, and sprinkle the blood around the mining site to appease the devils of the place. Raymond, a Christian preacher and soldier guarding a mining site, explained the sacrifices to me one afternoon as we watched a local chief slit a goat's neck and leach its blood into a pan of soil. "Maybe you don't believe in the devils, so you can



go along and get money and stone," he said. "But if you have the native belief, like I do, and you don't sacrifice to them, the work will never go smoothly." Tales of total loss were certainly easier to come by in Kono than tales of the big score.

Kassim Basma, a Lebanese in his mid-fifties, is one of the most established diamond dons in Koidu. When word reached Kono that Executive Outcomes might be leaving, he and his fellow Lebanese merchants offered to foot the bill for an E.O. contingent themselves. Kassim, a small, gray-haired man with a famously sweet tongue, had lost millions of dollars during the two rebel invasions of Kono, and each time he had managed to recoup his bundle. Now his shop was open day and night, and a steady parade of sol-

He shook his head. "Color not bad, shape not good." They argued. He offered \$14,000. They wanted \$16,500.

A few military policemen loaded with grenades and guns suddenly walked in and reported that they'd just trucked eighty-nine renegade soldiers off to prison in Freetown. Kassim put down his loupe and paid the MPs with several rolls of leones, the national currency. "Security," he said to me and smiled, waving away a mosquito. It was all so smooth, just another business expense. The MPs exchanged a few words and a laugh with the diamond sellers and then left.

Kassim looked back at his customers as if there'd been no interruption. "You come to me because you want for make profit, eh? I give you \$16,500, I lose." The palaver went on until the Sierra Leonians left with the stone. "I know them," Kassim said. "They will try everywhere else. Then they will be back to take the \$14,000, eh?" he

said, his lips, eyes, and ears rising in his signature flashing smile. The stone would probably fetch him three or four times that much on his next trip to the Antwerp market.

Later that afternoon I went to visit one of Kassim's sprawling open-pit mines. Hundreds of people, spread out along terraces of heavy sand, were digging up the topsoil to get down to the mineral-rich gravel. They were paid between one and five dollars a day, plus some rice. It looked like a massive excavation site. After all that labor, though, no ancient city would be discovered and no buildings would be erected; instead, hundreds of thousands of couples around the world would consecrate their engagements with the little stone ferreted out of the mud.

Hopping down one of the sand walls to get a closer look, I suddenly found myself sinking into a pit of gritty, yellow and red sludge. Several men lunged at me and dragged me out but didn't let go. Others packed in close. At least sixteen hands were all over me, pulling gravel off my

jeans, out from between my toes, scratching inside my sandals, around my ankles, and behind my knees, yanking bits of sand off my hands. I thought such chivalric concern for my cleanliness a bit excessive, but then I saw that the men were hardly aware of me. Their eyes were fixated on the bits of mud still clinging to me. It was the precious, diamond-filled gravel, unearthed by hours of toil under the midday sun, that they were trying to protect. Their fingers pecked at me like vultures vying for carrion. And although they bore no malice—when they were done with me everyone laughed heartily—it was easy to see how quickly such professional greed could turn violent.

**I**n August 1995, a few months after the South Africans occupied Kono, one of the worst massacres of the war was committed in Njaiama Nimikoro, a village just thirty minutes from E.O.'s base in Koidu. Njaiama was the place where, in 1930, a British colonial officer discovered the country's first diamond mine, where, during the war, a new point of access to a subterranean kimberlite diamond dike had been found. Officers of the Sierra Leonean military who controlled the area saw this new vein of riches as theirs to exploit, but the representative of the local paramount chief claimed the prize as his own and berated the soldiers for mining instead of defending the people, as the South Africans did. Shortly thereafter, armed men attacked the village at night, slaughtering between 150 and 250 civilians. The victims were burned alive in their huts, hacked with machetes, or shot. The surviving villagers believed that the attackers were the military, trying to teach them a lesson.

Although E.O.'s men arrived on the scene only after the killers had fled, they were regarded locally as the heroes of the story. They had saved two babies, whose mothers had been killed, and the woman who later adopted one of the orphans named him "Colonel Rudolph" after the Afrikaner, Colonel Roelf Van Heerden, who commanded Kono. A

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diers, government officials, and miners filed through an alley filled with squawking chickens, generators, tires, and fuel tanks, and past his squad of personal security guards, to make deals in his dingy office.

One morning, I found Kassim in blue silk pajamas, sitting behind his desk between a steel safe and a ham radio that operated off a truck battery. (The phone lines remained cut, and only people with private generators had electricity; Kono's water works had also been destroyed—not by the war but by Kassim, who had recklessly machine-mined into the dams.) He was hunched under a fluorescent lamp, studying a large diamond through a loupe, twirling the stone around and around against his half-inch-long pinky fingernail. He dropped it into a black dish, poked it with tweezers, weighed it on a miniature scale, then raised his head, squinted at his customers, and smiled. Three Sierra Leonean men in brightly colored robes sat across from him swinging their legs, confident in the quality of their offering.



new hagiography had begun, and the South Africans were quick to encourage it.

Sahfillie Matturi, the paramount chief of Njaiama and the architect who had designed most of Koidu's prairie-style buildings, lost much of his extended family in the massacre. He told me that he admired the South Africans' professionalism. "Our soldiers are away even though they have rifles. But these South Africans, when the rebels are there, they would succeed in decimating them." And Chief Matturi had no problem with E.O.'s politics. In South Africa, he explained, he had endured many years of war and would now spare a few units to help its beleaguered African brethren. Colonel Roelf did nothing to dispel these illusions. "I have a wonderful

relationship with the chiefs," he said. "They tell the people we are Africans and that Mandela has sent us. I don't want to confuse them." (In fact, Executive Outcomes is an embarrassment to Nelson Mandela, and the South African government is trying to ban organizations like E.O. from employing former South African soldiers to fight in foreign countries.)

The power and status of the white Africans were enhanced by local notions about black magic and white magic. "There's a myth among traditional village folk that white people are morally enlightened," explained Joe Opala, an American anthropologist who has lived in Sierra Leone for twenty-one years. "The myth is that Africans fight against each other and bring their neighbor down while white people have progressed because they work together. They say this is why Africans have destructive witchcraft and whites have high-tech magic, like radios, motors, and planes." Many people

Kono believed that the South Africans had a satellite receiver on their hilltop perch that watched them and would protect them from

the rebels. The rebels believed that the South Africans had the power to spot and attack their bases from the sky at night, and the rebels were right: E.O.'s helicopters were fitted with infrared night-vision devices.

The white Africans exploited these local beliefs. One afternoon I



DIAMOND MINING IN KOIDU

drove with Rick Verster, a South African, and his Sierra Leonean workers along a muddy track he'd cleared through the bush. A former military intelligence officer who grew up in Zululand, Rick had come to Sierra Leone on the heels of E.O. to try his luck as a miner.

He was transporting his workers to a mining site on the Bafi River, and they took the occasion to complain that he wasn't providing them with enough food. Rick said nothing. Then, suddenly, he slammed on the brakes, jumped out, ran behind the Land Rover, and returned to the window holding a small poisonous night adder. The Africans shrank back in terror as he dangled the snake over his face, bit off its head, spat it out, and dropped the body in his mouth. His jaws and cheeks shook as he chewed up the snake and swallowed it. The Africans murmured words to God.

Rick spat out some adder mulch and, trying to ape the local custom, said: "Why you always wait for me for food? You hungry, go to de bush and get food. De snake and de bush food build de body immunity against

disease. This is what they teach us in the South African Defence Forces." He cackled loudly, and the Sierra Leoneans responded with nervous laughter.

Later, the local chief gathered the people around Rick under a cotton tree. He said that Rick was an African,

a black man with white skin who understood the black man's troubles and had come to end their suffering. The chief dubbed him Moses: like Moses saving the Israelites from Pharaoh, Rick had saved the people from their corrupt former overlords. Behind the myth, the facts were much more prosaic, and typical of the coarse brutality of



the place: Rick, a 220-pound former paratrooper, had punched out the teeth of the corrupt mining boss who had preceded him and promised the same for anyone else who tried to mess with him.

**I**n Fleming's 1956 novel *Diamonds Are Forever* opens with a few South Africans perched on a veld near the border between Sierra Leone and Guinea, operating a smuggling pipeline and worrying about the heat coming down from the deadly Diamond Corporation men. Fleming based his James Bond tale on reality. In the 1950s, Harry Oppenheimer, the South African chairman of De Beers, set out to crush his competitors in Sierra Leone by enlisting Sir Percy Sillitoe, one of Britain's top counterespionage agents during World War II,



who had retired and was selling chocolates on the coast of England. Sillitoe orchestrated an intelligence network of local informants along the smuggling trail, hired an army of mercenaries, and launched an all-out diamond war. The mercenaries laid

ship between E.O. and the Sierra Leonians seemed typically colonialist and patronizing, Chief Matturi took a forgiving, almost fatherly view of the South Africans. These whites had been kept at arm's length by the world for long enough. Now that

the mines. If there was a problem with a thief, a rapist, a renegade soldier, or an illicit miner, the locals went to "Colonel Rudolph," not the police. One blisteringly hot afternoon a group of women came to request protection for a festival and



EXECUTIVE OUTCOMES SOLDIERS AT THEIR BASE, OVERLOOKING KONO

booby traps, mined the border crossings, and ambushed the smugglers—predominantly Mingo tribesmen and Lebanese—until finally they were persuaded to sell their wares to the De Beers buyers.

Chief Matturi remembered "those dark old days" when the British ran Kono like a police state, with checkpoints, spies, and a private, imported security force. Although he said he would never choose to return to that time, he recalled that when independence came, "I didn't want to see the British leave us yet. We weren't ripe for autonomy." Native industrialization of the diamond business—cutting, polishing, and setting—which might have led to real independence when the colonialists left, never took place. Instead, he said, "the corruption just flowed in and brought us down."

Although the scenario under Executive Outcomes was not that different, Matturi thought the tension between whites and blacks had subsided significantly since the colonial days. Whereas to an outsider the relation-

they'd reconciled their differences at home, he thought they ought to be given a chance to apply their energies elsewhere and renegotiate their relationship to black Africa.

The South Africans themselves eagerly embraced the idea of their work as a kind of post-apartheid redemption. One E.O. pilot I met at the Kono airstrip recalled how moved he was by the gratitude of the Sierra Leonians and the children in Freetown who ran after him screaming, "Bafana Bafana" (the name of the revered South African soccer team). "Maybe there is life after apartheid," he said. He was thinking about staying on in Sierra

Leone to start up a helicopter service.

Colonel Roelf, his Afrikaner officers, and a few dozen of his black African troops had occupied a compound of battered stone houses, the old residences of the now-abandoned Standard Bank, high on a hill overlooking the diamond fields. The setting suited their role as the lords of Kono and the watchdogs of

the soccer game they were holding down at the river. Roelf promised to help. "I am the ombudsman," he told me.

A fastidious sort, wiry and tanned, with a full mustache and beard and tinted spectacles, Roelf looked very much at home sitting in his fatigues under the thatch-and-bamboo canopy that his troops had erected on the hill. A chimpanzee named Tommy, one of E.O.'s pets, leaped off the bamboo rafters and onto Roelf's lap. The South Africans had injected a little "civilization" into their rustic outpost—a homemade bush saloon, replete with stools, carved bar, refrigerator, beer, lights, and boom box. Every Friday night they had a away-from-home *braaivleis*, or

Afrikaner open-air barbecue, with beef flown in from South Africa and enough booze to get sloshed and have a good "punch-up." When a new diamond prospector from North America, Europe, or South Africa landed in Kono, he would inevitably roll up to E.O.'s bar to get an update on security or just to hang out.

Colonel Roelf, a Namibian-born Afrikaner, had spent most of his professional life trying to crush black nationalist movements in southern Africa on behalf of the apartheid regime; he described one of his old units as specialists in political assassinations. He said he had no regrets about his past exploits; on the contrary, he was proud of them. But there was something even more empowering about his current position as Kono's beloved marshal and humanitarian, and he embraced the job, chairing town meetings and offering E.O. helicopters to transport demobilized child soldiers to Freetown. The Konos showed their appreciation for their new protector by making



him one of their own, calling him "Sahr," the name traditionally given to a firstborn son.

"We want to help African countries to neutralize their rebel wars and not depend on the U.N. to solve their problems. We are something like the U.N. of Africa, only with a smaller budget," Roelf said grandly, tipping a beer. He put his arm around the chief hunter of Kono, who had come by to discuss ammunition, and added, "These people don't want the Americans or the U.N. or the British here. We are the only ones they trust, because they know we are Africans."

Roelf became aggressive and territorial when speaking about other whites encroaching on his turf, as did all of E.O.'s Afrikaners. "South Africans are the only whites in the world with the right to exploit Africa," they often told me. "It's our continent." They resented the Americans and Europeans who criticized the Afrikaners' racism and way of life but who had the luxury of flying in to do business, have an adventure, and then fly home again. Beneath Roelf's paternalism and colonial arrogance toward the Sierra Leonians lurked a fundamental anxiety and fear of extinction that afflicted most Afrikaners, who were, after all, a minority. Such insecurities had shaped the Boer character and steered Boer politics for centuries.

From the company's hilltop base, one could see on the horizon an enormous domed granite rock, close to the Guinean border along the old smugglers' trail. The village below the rock was famous for its witchcraft and powerful healers. Some Sierra Leonians said that the rock was the birthplace of voodoo. For the Afrikaners the rock represented another kind of magic: their old covenant with their God. They called it the Voortrekker Monument, because it resembled the monolithic shrine of the same name that looms over Pretoria and commemorates the Boer settlers' pact with God and God's subsequent aid in their victory over 10,000

Zulus in 1838. The Boers' sense of vulnerability persisted, however, and metamorphosed into the violent paranoia that dominated the apartheid era. Now, once again, the Afrikaners believe that they are in a fight for nothing less than the survival of their tribe, their history, and their culture.

With the end of apartheid, Afrikaners suffered a political defeat, but

## THE SOUTH AFRICANS EAGERLY EMBRACED THE IDEA OF THEIR WORK AS A KIND OF POST-APARTHEID REDEMPTION

ironically, at the same moment, the entire African continent opened up to them. Suddenly, they could travel and trade freely in countries that previously would have expelled them the moment they arrived at the airport. And so they began to scramble over the continent, shoring up economic turf as compensation for their loss of political power. Roelf imagined himself carrying on in the tradition of the self-reliant Boer pioneers of yore. "The Boers are the only colonialists left in Africa," he said, without a hint of apology. "And now we're moving north."

**H**enri de Montherlant, a French writer and adventurer who had plunged eagerly into World War I, once wrote how he "loved life at the front, the bath in the elemental, the annihilation of the intelligence and the heart." Montherlant, a flamboyant romantic, may not have cut the typical figure of a soldier, but there will always be men who find war an exhilarating experience and become addicted to it. For some, it's a great relief to be freed of the burden of constructing a life. And as long as there's a cause, whether God, country, family, or honor, they will be able to justify the killing. E.O.'s workforce was largely made up of such battle-hardened soldiers, most of whom had been at war for over fifteen years, fighting for a way of life that they believed in deeply, however objectionable it seemed to the rest

of the world. As the political landscape in South Africa shifted, deposing the white regime, these former heroes were cast onto the margins of society. Overnight, they became a disillusioned, lost generation. For some who joined E.O., the transition from killing for a cause to killing for a bank account proved psychologically destabilizing.

The day before I left Kono, one of the South Africans, whom I'll call Jan, offered to drive me to look for a local priest who was working with demobilized child soldiers. Unlike the child soldiers, Jan, who was in his early forties, could not go back to civilian life. He wouldn't know how. He could look very hard and very mean, with his deeply creased skin tucked into a permanent squint around cerulean eyes. He didn't like talking very much and often seemed on the verge of an enraged explosion. As a young corporal in South Africa, Jan got into some trouble, and for punishment he was offered up to Barlow's 32 Battalion, secretly formed in 1975 to destabilize the pro-communist Angolan government.

Jan remembered his first search-and-destroy mission, tracking the enemy into Angola, killing everything that moved—"sheep, cattle, civilians, everything." Eventually, he became inured to the killing, just as he became inured to inflicting beatings and torture, "the things you have to do," he said, "to get information and stay alive." Before it was disbanded, Jan told me, the 32 Battalion was honored in South Africa for having the highest "kill rate" of any unit. He was still proud of that. "I worked for my government to protect my people and did what I was told to do. If we killed terrorists in their beds, it was because they were hiding weapons. Is that so wrong?"

As the jeep rattled through the dusty streets, children ran out from under the thatched roofs of the mud huts, shouting, "South African," waving and laughing, and the young boys gave the thumbs-up to Jan. After a brief attempt at resistance, Jan broke



out laughing. He said that it was a completely new experience to be liked by locals. Maybe, he said, he'd finally done some good in his life.

Later, at the church, whether because of the children or the possibility of a vaguely sympathetic ear, Jan said that he wanted to tell me a story. Before coming to Sierra Leone, Jan said, he had worked with E.O. in Angola. They had just captured Cacolo, an important diamond town. Dead civilians were lying everywhere in the streets. Jan came to a small chapel called St. Joseph's Mission that had been badly shot up. Terrified kids were running around the grounds. Jan took one skinny little boy under his wing, looked after him, fed him, and let him sleep at the foot of his bed. The place had passed back and forth innumerable times during some twenty years of war, and the boy told him that every time the rebels took it they killed all the people who couldn't run away. "I loved that little boy," Jan said. "My mistake."

Jan's unit was soon transferred from Cacolo to Angola's coastal oil fields. Sometime later, word reached him that Cacolo had fallen again to the rebels. He was sure that they'd killed his boy, he told me, and then for a while he said nothing. He was holding his breath, and the artery along his neck was pulsing furiously. When I saw his tears, I knew he was crying not only about the boy but about his whole life. Whether he had protected the boy because he wanted human companionship or as a kind of redemption for the years he'd spent decimating Angola, Jan ultimately saw the gesture as futile.

Jan admitted that he often didn't feel great about what he had had to do as an enforcer of apartheid. "I've done a lot of terrible things," he said, "but I can't change that now." At least when he was a member of a government army, someone else had been in charge, providing easy explanations for why he was killing. He didn't have to think. Paradoxically, now that he felt some pride in his work and could even see how much the Sierra Leoneans appreciated his presence, his con-

science was in turmoil. He had no allegiances anymore, and no good explanation for why he was still at war. "If you're killing for your government, your people, your fatherland, you have some loyalty. It's here," he said, grab-

## BARLOW ENCOURAGES HIS MEN TO READ THE WORKS OF HEIDI AND ALVIN TOFFLER, NEWT GINGRICH'S GURUS

bing his breast. "But if you're no longer killing for your government or your country, you're a murderer. So what does that make me?"

Tomorrow, I knew, Jan would push away these confusing emotions and go back to his trade, because in the end, as he told me, it was all he knew how to do, and he loved a good fight. It kept him alert and alive.

From its inception, Executive Outcomes has exhibited an institutional genius for surfing the changing waves of African history, and its greatest P.R. problem has been not in the countries where it fights but at home in South Africa. The company's first major contract was with the Angolan government, an alliance that took all observers by surprise. This was, after all, the same Angolan government that the South African Defence Forces—including all of E.O.'s employees—had vigorously fought to destabilize since the mid-1970s.

For hard-liners in South Africa's military establishment, E.O.'s action was the ultimate betrayal, and they pushed for South Africa's justice department to take action against the firm. But nothing was done. With the end of the Cold War, and Mandela's election, the special forces and covert units of the apartheid regime were disbanded, and the existence of E.O. actually solved a potentially dangerous military unemployment problem in South Africa. For elite commandos, who had reason to fear prosecution for apartheid political crimes, E.O. provided a golden parachute into exile and salaries three times higher

than those of the peacetime national army.

Eeben Barlow, his South African partners, and his London colleague Anthony Buckingham, pulled off a priceless coup, purloining the best of the South African special forces to do their dirty work in Africa's danger zones while back in Pretoria, Barlow can sip coffee and discuss the company's goals using phrases like "law enforcement" and "stabilization." Barlow's villa har-

evokes the air of a battlefield operation, even in the boardroom, where the walls are animated with annual-report photos of bearded camouflaged men at battle and a framed copy of a poster of a CD and video that E.O. commissioned called "Dogs of War" (Like a proper corporation, E.O. has also produced a slew of advertising items—pens, lighters, badges, and T-shirts stamped with its logo, the chessboard knight.)

Barlow seems to be taking his cues from art as much as from life. But his little world is not fiction, and in fact it gives a shape to one of the latest entries in the lexicon of conflict analysis: the "privatization of violence." This phenomenon is as old as the first hit man, but the coinage reflects a new trend. In Colombia, British Petroleum has hired a battalion of Colombian soldiers to guard against guerrilla attacks. (The drug lords have done the same thing.) In Haiti, former soldiers have been consigned by the wealthy to form private family forces. In Liberia, industrial gangs are employed by foreign corporations to extract natural resources. Government armies will of course do the same, as the United States did to protect its interests in the Persian Gulf. At the urging of the United States, Croatia hired Military Professional Resources Inc.—a private firm of retired U.S. generals, based in Alexandria, Virginia—to prepare the Croatian army for a counteroffensive against the Serbs in the summer of 1995. (MPRI, as the firm is known, is now training the Bosnians and is reported to have picked up E.O.'s contract in Angola.)

The phrase "privatization of violence" attempts to describe a shift



t of the age of geopolitics into the e of geoeconomics, in which trade trunks ideology and the superpowers are no longer going to plunge into war-torn Third World country (as they would have a decade or two earlier) and disgorge arms, mercenaries, and development aid to contain the influence of the other superpower. With the end of the Cold War, the prevailing attitude toward Africa, especially in America, is that Africa's wars are not, after all, our problem. When an African political crisis erupts into international attention—as in Zaire and Rwanda this past fall—it is treated by the powers-that-be in the U.N. Security Council as a purely humanitarian crisis, often with disastrous results. Although the idea of killing to end killing confounds the genteel sensibility, the fact remains that wars need to be won, one way or another. Sierra Leone, E.O.'s decisive intervention allowed at least three hundred thousand people to return to their homes in Kono and many thousands more elsewhere. Even in Washington foreign-policy circles, where people feel compelled to limit their on-the-record commentary to expressions of disapproval at the idea of private armies running loose around the globe, E.O. has a certain appeal. Unlike with a U.N. or American force, E.O.'s decision makers are not accountable to any constituency when employees are killed. During a round of creative thinking at the U.S. National Security Council this past November about securing a humanitarian corridor for the fleeing Rwandan Hutu refugees, someone suggested using Executive Outcomes. The idea was dismissed when the question was raised of who would pay the bill. Nevertheless, Washington analysts do not hesitate—off the record—to tally the enormous costs of the U.N.'s failed peacekeeping operation in Angola against E.O.'s quick success there. It was the best fifty or sixty million dollars the Angolan government ever spent," one Washington defense expert told me. "Executive Outcomes," he added, "is the small wave of the future in

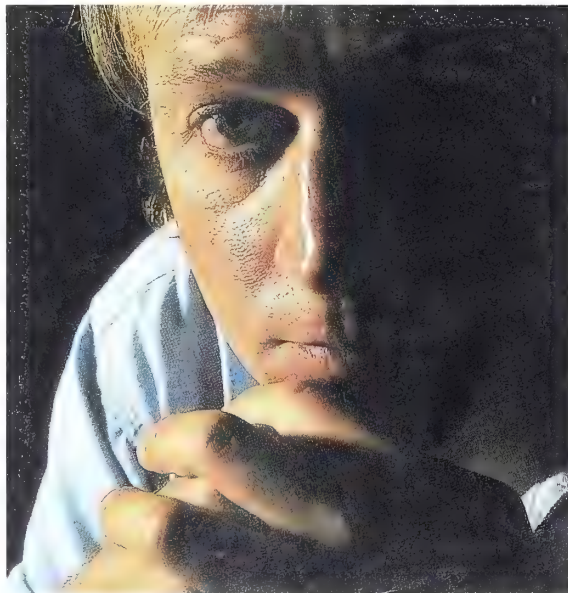
terms of defense and security, because the international community has abdicated that role." As he saw it, the privatization of defense on the international scene is not that different from a similar trend at home. In the United States, he said, "you already see more and more people hiring private security firms to keep the Third World away from suburban America."

Like a hawk riding the thermals, Barlow is simply capitalizing on the shifting currents. Sitting in his elegant living room, he told me that he encourages his men to read up on the works of two of Newt Gingrich's gurus, the futurologists Heidi and Alvin Toffler, whose book *War and Anti-War* offers the pop version of Van Creveld. "It discusses the role of the military in the changing political environment," Barlow explained. The soldier of the future will have to be competitive. In the old South African military, Barlow said, "you got paid if you did the work or not. Our approach is that if you cannot prove or show you do your work, you're not part of us anymore." A military force under a nation's flag cannot operate that way, he added. "Only a commercial outfit like Executive Outcomes can."

Barlow has managed to dress up the old idea of white dominance on the African continent in the new rhetoric of the global marketplace. The army is now just one spoke in the wheel of Strategic Resources Corporation, an umbrella company—Barlow is just one of many board members—that has been spawning joint British-South African and third-country companies at the rate of about ten a year, working in everything from oil and diamond mining, telecommunications, arms supplies, security guards,

land-mine deactivating, and water drilling to safari travel.

For the time being, Barlow is concerned with keeping the image of his company clean as he builds his empire. He claims to have rejected proposals from the Sudanese rebels, from Algerian religious factions, from Rwanda's former Hutu regime, from former Yugoslav states. "We're not going to work for a government that supports terrorist movements or commits genocide. We won't get involved in religious wars or a conflict where we don't understand the particular politics," he says. "We are not



EEBEN BARLOW

someone's cannon fodder." He insists that E.O. will work only for "legitimate" governments, a criterion that gives license to an enormous latitude of principle, since legitimacy seems merely to mean whoever controls the palace, be it Sierra Leone's Valentine Strasser, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, or Zaire's dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko (with whom E.O. is reportedly negotiating, although Barlow denies it). Barlow's record is "clean" to date. But he is accountable to no nation and no legal body. His law is the marketplace. And if the geoeconomic world order should require Barlow to adapt his services for a new kind of client, there isn't much to prevent the chameleon from once again changing colors. ■

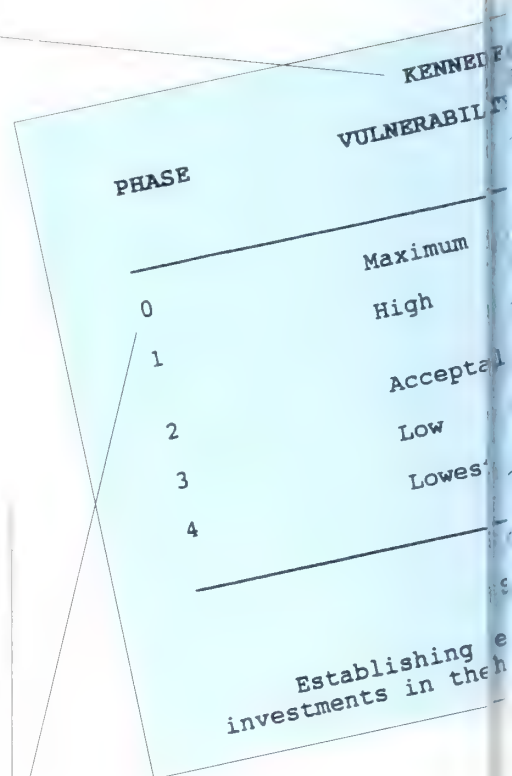


## DOING

## Inside a Colombian cartel's money

This chart was confiscated from the computer of Franklin Jurado, a Harvard-educated Colombian economist who confessed last spring to having laundered \$36 million in profits from U.S. cocaine sales for José Santacruz-Londoño, one of the top figures in the Cali cartel. The chart comes at the end of a twenty-page memorandum that Jurado, now fifty, wrote from his base in Luxembourg to his bosses in Cali. In it he outlined each step of an elaborate process to obscure the source and holder of the illicit funds by channeling the money through bank accounts and front companies around the world. Jurado, who was paid \$1,000 a day for his efforts, represented his system in this chart, a "virtual road map to Jurado's scheme," according to his prosecutor, Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark W. Lerner. The system had two stages. The first Jurado dubbed the "Kennedification Stage," referring to Joseph Kennedy's ability to cleanse his bootlegging profits by channeling them into legitimate investments. Jurado hoped to replicate Kennedy's success with a five-phase process. "A phase," he wrote, "is a transition period during which assets move from a higher to a lower level of risk." Jurado's ultimate goal was to scrub the drug money so clean that it could be repatriated to Colombia and invested in Santacruz's numerous "legitimate" companies. (The chart and memo were introduced as evidence and translated from the original Spanish by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency.)

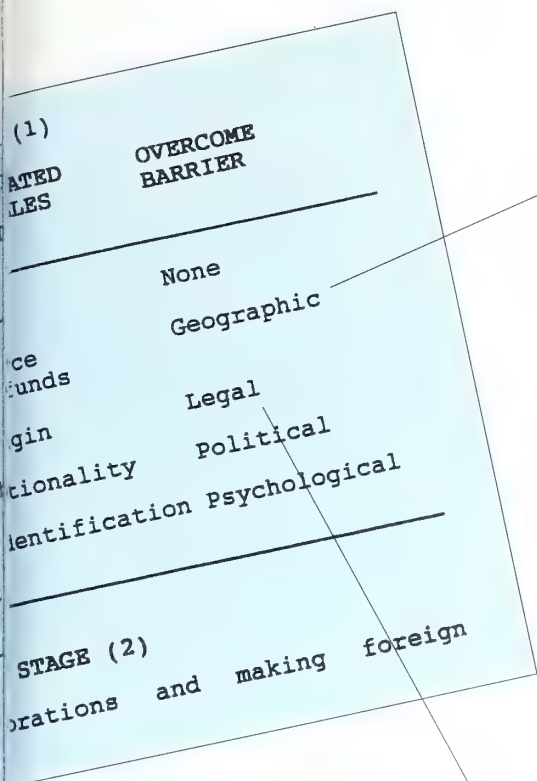
The complexity of Jurado's system was due to the extraordinary scrutiny with which international-banking and drug-enforcement authorities view large sums moving into or out of Colombia. To avoid this scrutiny, during the mid-'80s the Cali bosses initiated what Jurado later called "Phase 0" by having their couriers deposit \$64 million in small bills from U.S. drug sales into the First InterAmericas Bank in Panama City. In his memo, Jurado notes that Phase 0 assets are extremely vulnerable because they "are quite close to their liquid source, in questionable banking markets, and are susceptible to outside scrutiny." The Cali bosses found this out the hard way when, in 1985, Panamanian authorities discovered that the InterAmericas "bank" was controlled by the Cali cartel, had no bona fide customers, and was merely a house equipped with a large living-room table for counting money. Panama froze \$28 million in assets that could be directly linked to the drug traffickers; the cartel quickly shifted the rest into other Panamanian banks. In early 1987, Edgar García, a Santacruz lieutenant, hired Jurado—who had previously helped to establish the Cali Stock Exchange—to purify the remaining \$36 million by transferring it out of suspect Latin banking markets and filtering it through a series of increasingly more pristine European holdings. At each step the cash became cleaner; the waters, muddier.





# WASH

ng machine, by Mark Schapiro



The Cali cartel had already begun Phase 1 by depositing the \$36 million into more credible Panamanian banks. However, the assets were still easily traceable and remained in a country notorious as a drug-money-laundering haven. To overcome this "geographic" barrier, Jurado used the Panamanian offices of Merrill Lynch and other financial institutions to change the cash into money orders that could then be wired to Europe as bank-to-bank transfers. To prepare for Phase 2, Jurado had in the meantime established himself in Luxembourg and traveled throughout Europe, meeting with bankers to assess their rules regarding foreign investments. Jurado's memo details the pros and cons of money laundering in twelve countries, and his analysis provides some surprises. Austria, Jurado wrote, "is extremely open to our type of deposits; it also offers extraordinary facilities in terms of confidentiality and banking discretion," including coded or pseudonymous accounts and the ability to open accounts by mail. Hungarian banks seeking Western capital were also pleasantly receptive. Banks in Scotland and the Channel Islands, with putative autonomy from British banking authorities, were a "financial paradise." But Jurado suggested avoiding Switzerland, where pressure from the U.S. Treasury Department was creating a "lack of trustworthiness in reference to confidentiality."

His analysis complete, Jurado was ready to begin Phase 2: burying the money's origin by transferring it out of Panama and into European accounts, each listing a European address for the account holder. Once in banks subject to the rules of the European Community, the money would acquire the luster of credibility—hence the "legal" advantage. Over a three-year period, Jurado coordinated the transfer of U.S. dollars from the Panamanian banks into more than one hundred accounts in sixty-eight banks in nine countries: Austria, Denmark, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, and Monaco. Opening deposits ranged from \$50,000 to \$1,000,000 apiece, money that Jurado told bank examiners came from "cattle," "clothing," and "sugar" interests in Colombia. To diversify the holdings, Jurado initiated a two-pronged attack. Where possible he opened accounts by mail, using signatures from three of Santacruz's mistresses in Cali. The remainder were opened during junkets in which Jurado, García, and Heriberto Castro-Meza and Esperanza Rodríguez de Castro—Santacruz's in-laws—would travel throughout Europe visiting banks willing to accept Colombian clients. Most of the accounts were opened in the name of Castro-Meza or his wife, but Jurado maintained power of attorney. A final tally compiled by the U.S. Attorney's office included seventy-seven accounts assigned to Santacruz's in-laws, another twelve in the names of his mistresses, and dozens using codes or European-sounding names later traced back to Jurado.

Mark Schapiro writes for the New York Times, The Nation, and Condé Nast Traveler. His last piece for Harper's Magazine, "The Fine Art of Sexual Harassment," appeared in the July 1994 issue. He lives in New York City.

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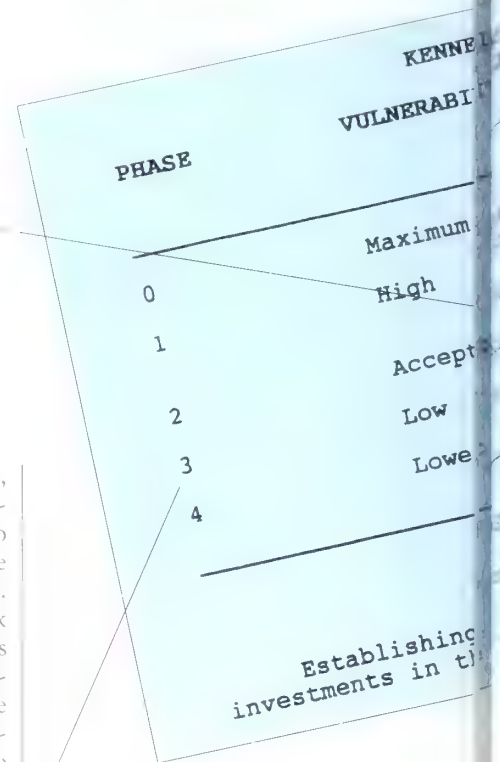


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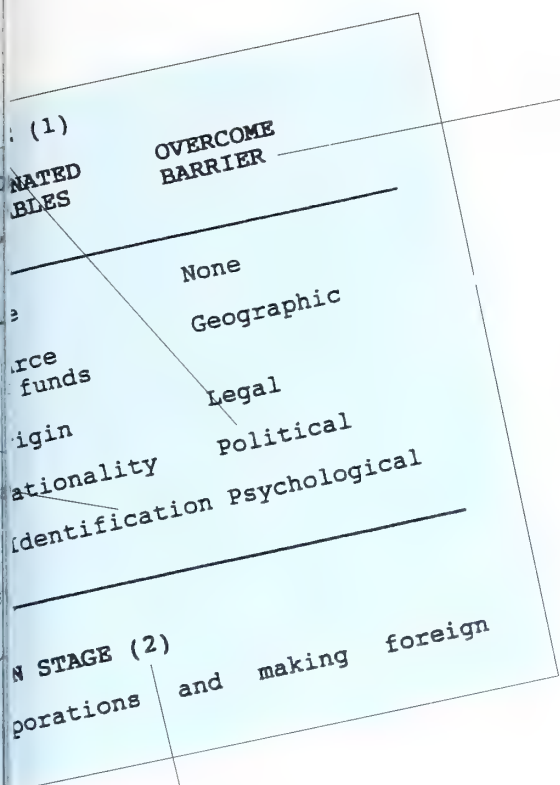
Tracing the money back to Jurado and the others would prove to be no easy task. Using his power of attorney over all the accounts, Jurado physically and electronically shifted assets between them, attempting to keep the balance in each as low as possible to avoid suspicion. Each transfer was kept under the amount (usually about \$10,000) that automatically triggers an investigation by bank examiners—a precaution known as "smurfing." Jurado also began Phase 3: obscuring the nationality of the account holders by transferring assets into new accounts opened under European names such as "Peter Hoffman" and "Hannika Schmidt." Assigning accounts to fictitious Europeans removed the "political" barrier—the heightened surveillance generally given to Colombian or Hispanic-surnamed accounts.

Jurado then began to establish European front companies that, during Phase 4, would receive investments from the fictitious European account holders. Once deposited in these front companies, the money would be all but untraceable; local officials would have no cause, Jurado noted, "whether geographic, legal, political or psychological to investigate the assets. . . . [P]ast this stage all assets may be used in any market with no significant questioning." The ultimate goal of Jurado's scheme was to create a self-contained cartel economy, in which cash could be shuttled at will between front companies in Europe, Colombia, and even America, where Santacruz already had front companies such as Liberty Shipment, an export concern based in Baltimore. Once in place, this economy could cleanse not only the \$36 million from Panama but new cartel revenue.

Although Jurado was very careful to cover the money's tracks, he was decidedly less cautious about covering his own. His operation was intercepted between Phases 3 and 4, according to DEA intelligence analyst Kenneth Robinson—just before he was able to transfer the funds into European front companies. Two factors led to his downfall: In the aftermath of a bank failure in Monaco, investigators discovered several suspicious accounts linked to Jurado. At roughly the same time, incessant noise from a money-counting machine in Jurado's house prompted a neighbor to alert the Luxembourg police. Empowered by a new law making money laundering illegal, the police initiated a wiretap in April 1990. Jurado and García were arrested in Luxembourg two months later. The DEA, which had been investigating Santacruz's operation for more than a decade, assisted Luxembourg prosecutors by demonstrating that the money the two were accused of laundering originated from drug sales in the U.S. Jurado was left to defend himself, while García received legal assistance from a former Justice Department drug-enforcement attorney, Michael Abbell, who later faced money-laundering charges of his own arising from his legal work for Santacruz. Jurado and García were convicted by a Luxembourg court in 1992. U.S. officials filed an extradition request, and in May 1994 the two men were met at New York's Kennedy Airport by federal marshals and charged with money laundering and drug trafficking.







Evidence like this document is a hard barrier to overcome. But brought before American authorities, Jurado mounted what could be called the *Casablanca* defense, saying that he was "shocked, shocked" that the cash he was laundering was Santacruz's drug money. Instead, he claimed he had believed the money to be flight capital of rich Colombians who were using his system to evade Colombian taxes and currency export controls (which would violate Colombian, but not American, law). Jurado's rather strange odyssey suggests the remote possibility that he might have been, at least initially, duped by the cartel. Nowhere in this chart or his memo does Jurado refer to Santacruz or drugs. And his personal history is atypical of a Cali fixer. Jurado left Colombia in the early '80s, telling friends and associates that he had been threatened by the Cali cartel for refusing them access to the stock exchange. Jurado even approached the DEA and offered to act as an informant; the DEA turned him down. In the mid-'80s, he worked as a researcher on drug policy for then Harvard Professor Mark Kleiman, producing a well-documented portrait of the drug market in Lawrence, Massachusetts, for just \$8 an hour. Kleiman was prepared to testify to Jurado's "visceral hatred" for the cartel but does add a caveat: "He had a great capacity of believing what he wanted to believe. Magical realism, after all, doesn't just come out of nowhere in Colombia." Jurado may have been a patsy, but it is far more likely that he maintained his innocence in order to avoid retribution from Santacruz, who, although protected from extradition by Colombian law, certainly did not want his dirty laundry aired in American courts. On April 11, 1996, one month after Santacruz was gunned down by Medellín police following his escape from prison, Jurado and García each pled guilty to a single count of money laundering in a Brooklyn federal court. Jurado was sentenced to seven and a half years, García to ten. They will be deported to uncertain futures in Colombia immediately upon their release, which for Jurado may come as early as this year.

Had it passed through all five phases, the money would have been "sanctified" by having the European front companies invest the cash in any one of Santacruz's many "legitimate" businesses back in Colombia, including restaurants, construction companies, pharmaceutical enterprises, and real estate holdings. Now, however, the money will take a quite different route. In October 1996, the U.S. Attorney issued an asset-forfeiture request to the nine countries with banks still holding monies linked to Jurado's scheme. Santacruz's surviving relatives and mistresses had already been notified of the impending seizures; not surprisingly, they declined to challenge the proceeding. Thus, the money now goes through another cycle in the washing machine: having started as tens and twenties on the streets of America, and traveled through many of the world's leading banks, it is now destined to be churned back into the Justice Department's drug war. For once, the United States, which spent about \$1.5 million on the investigation, stands to make a tidy profit from the Cali cartel.





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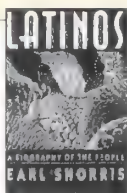
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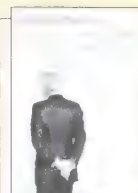


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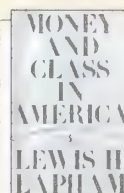
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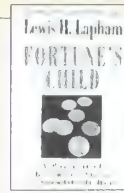
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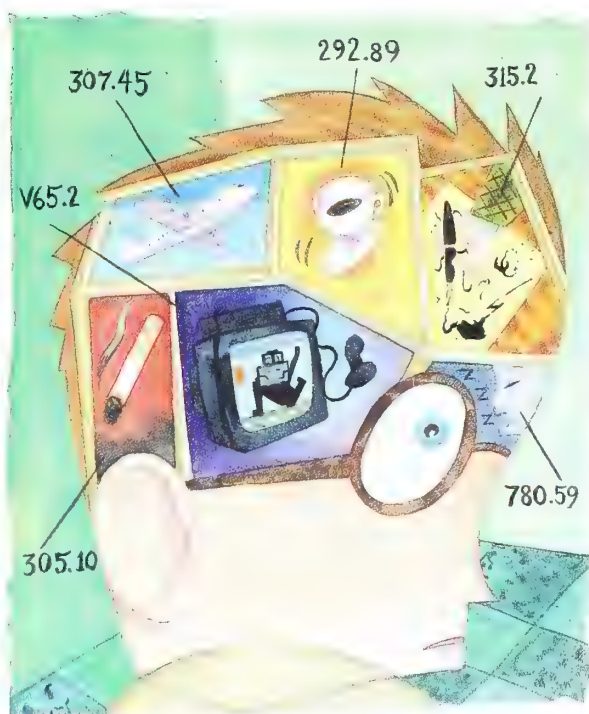
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Discussed in this essay:

*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition.*  
American Psychiatric Association. 886 pages. \$59.96 cloth; \$45 paper.

Has there ever been a task more futile than the attempt to encompass, in the work of a single lifetime, let alone in a single work, the whole of human experience? For roughly five thousand years, poets, playwrights, philosophers, and cranks have incinerated untold quantities of olive oil, beeswax, and fossil fuel in pursuit of this mad-deniably elusive goal; all have failed, sometimes heroically. Not even Shakespeare could manage it; closer to our own times, Dickens, a sentimental Englishman, the son of a clerk, perhaps came closest, though he believed in spontaneous human combustion and managed to miss the entirety of the twentieth century. Despite the best efforts of minds great, small, and sometimes insane, the rid-



dle of the human condition has remained utterly impervious to solution. Until now. According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition* (popularly known as the *DSM-IV*), human life is a form of mental illness.

Published by the American Psychi-

atric Association in 1994, the *DSM-IV* is some 886 pages long and weighs (in paperback) slightly less than three pounds; if worn over the heart in battle, it would probably stop a .50-caliber machine-gun bullet at 1,700 yards. Nearly a decade in the making, it is the product of work groups, task forces, advisers, and review committees (the acknowledgment of whom requires twenty-two pages) representing the flower of the profession and the distillation of its thought. The *DSM-IV* has no beginning, no middle, and no end; like a cookbook (which the preface is at pains to say it is not), the manual is organized

by categories, not chapters. But it does have a plot (everyone is either nuts or going there), a central and unifying thesis (everyone is treatable), and it tells its stark tale with implacable simplicity. Here, on a staggering scale, are gathered together all the known mental disturbances of humankind, the ill-

L. J. Davis is a contributing editor of *Harper's Magazine*. His last piece, "The Problem with Banks? Bankers," appeared in the June 1991 issue.



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nesses of mind and spirit that cry out for the therapeutic touch of — are you ready for this? — the very people who wrote the book.

First, and primarily, the *DSM-IV* is a book of dogma, though as theology it is pretty pedestrian stuff, rather along the lines of the owner's manual in an automobile glove compartment. Like all theories-of-everything, from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to the collected lyrics of Mr. Snoop Doggy Dogg, the language is simultaneously precise and vague. The precision, which arrives in cool, clinical, and occasionally impenetrable language, provides the undertaking with an aura of scientific objectivity, and the vagueness is necessary because precision can be limiting in both a semantic and a financial sense. Secondly, the *DSM-IV* is a catalogue. The merchandise consists of the psychiatric disorders described therein, the customers are the therapists, and this may be the only catalogue in the world that actually makes its customers money: each disorder, no matter how trivial, is accompanied by a billing code, enabling the therapist to fill out the relevant insurance form and receive an agreed-upon reward. The billing code for Enkopresis ("repeated passage of feces into inappropriate places"), for instance, is 307.7. Last, the manual bears an astounding resemblance to a militia's Web page, insofar as it constitutes an alternative reality under siege. The enemy, of course, is hard science and her white-coated thugs, who have long maintained that many psychiatric disorders do not exist and that others are physical diseases with mental consequences. Worse, things have been going hard science's way in recent years, which threatens no small number of soft-science incomes. The *DSM-IV*, then, may be read as a counterattack along the lines of a fertilizer bomb.

Perhaps some examples are in order. According to the *DSM-IV*, something called frotteurism (302.89) is the irresistible desire to sexually touch and rub against one's fellow passengers on mass transit. Something called fugue (300.13) consists of travel in foreign lands, often under an assumed identity. In reality, it may very well be that

the frotteurist is a helpless victim in the clutches of his obsession, but it's equally possible that he's simply a bored creep looking for a cheap thrill. Perhaps the fuguist is in psychological flight from a memory that cannot be borne and will utterly fail to welcome the news that he is not the Regent of Pomerania traveling incognito in Provence, but maybe he's just having his spot of fun. The *DSM-IV* is a stranger to such ambiguities. The *DSM-IV* says that the frotteurist and the fuguist, despite all conceivable arguments to the contrary, have lost their marbles, period and end of discussion.

Not content with the merely weird, the *DSM-IV* also attempts to claim dominion over the mundane. Current among the many symptoms of the deranged mind are bad writing (31.47), and its associated symptom, poor handwriting; coffee drinking, including coffee nerves (305.90), bad coffee nerves (292.89), inability to sleep after drinking too much coffee (292.8), and something that probably has something to do with coffee, though the therapist can't put his finger on it (292.9); shyness (299.80, also known as Asperger's Disorder); sleepwalking (307.46); jet lag (307.45); snobbishness (301.7, a subset of Antisocial Personality Disorder); and insomnia (307.4); to say nothing of tobacco smoking, which includes both getting hooked (305.10) and going cold turkey (292.0). You were out of your mind the last time you had a nightmare (307.47). Clumsiness is now a mental illness (315.4). So is playing video games (Malingering, V65.2). So is being just about anything "vigorously." So, under certain circumstances, falling asleep at night.

The foregoing list is neither random nor trivial, nor does it represent the sort of editorial oversight that occurs when, say, an otherwise reputable psychology text contains the claim that goats breathe through their ears. We are here confronted with a worldview where everything is a symptom and the predominant color is a shade of therapeutic gray. This has the advantage of making the therapist's job both remarkably simple and remarkably creative. Once the universe is populated with enough coffee-guzzling, cigarette-puffing, vigorous human beings

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no are crazy precisely because they  
 oke, drink coffee, and move about  
 an active and purposeful manner,  
 e psychoanalyst is placed in the po-  
 sition of the lucky fellow taken to the  
 ountaintop and shown powers and  
 minions. Here, hard science cannot  
 tack with its niggling discoveries  
 out bad brain chemicals and their ef-  
 fects on people who believe that gun-  
 ay is a perfectly reasonable response  
 disapproval, humor, or minor traf-  
 accidents. Instead, the pages of the  
 SM-IV are replete with mental ill-  
 nesses that have been hitherto re-  
 rded as perfectly normal behavior.  
 e therapist is invited not merely to  
 ay God but to play lawyer—to some  
 inds, a superior calling—and to in-  
 lge in a favorite diversion of the  
 American legal profession  
 known as “recruiting a fee.”

**B**y confining themselves to a sin-  
 e interpretation of the human dilem-  
 a—madness—the DSM-IV's authors  
 ve joined the monkeys-and-type-  
 rriters school of foul-weather marks-  
 anship: give a hunter an infinite  
 ount of ammunition, an infinite  
 ount of time, a distant target  
 ounded in fog, and the hunter will  
 metimes hit the target and some-  
 nes will hit something else:

The essential feature of Shared Psy-  
 chotic Disorder (Folie à Deux) is a delu-  
 sion that develops in an individual who  
 is involved in a close relationship with  
 another person (sometimes termed the  
 “inducer” or “the primary case”) who  
 already has a Psychotic Disorder with  
 prominent delusions (Criterion A). The  
 individual comes to share the delusional  
 beliefs of the primary case in whole or  
 in part (Criterion B). The delusion is not  
 better accounted for by another Psy-  
 chotic Disorder (e.g., Schizophrenia) or  
 a Mood Disorder With Psychotic Fea-  
 tures and is not due to the direct phys-  
 iological effects of a substance (e.g., am-  
 phetamine) or a general medical  
 condition (e.g., brain tumor) (Criterion  
 C)... The content of the shared delu-  
 sional beliefs... can include relatively  
 bizarre delusions (e.g., that radiation is  
 being transmitted into an apartment  
 from a hostile foreign power, causing  
 indigestion and diarrhea), mood-con-  
 gruent delusions (e.g., that the primary  
 case will soon receive a film contract  
 for \$2 million...), or the nonbizarre

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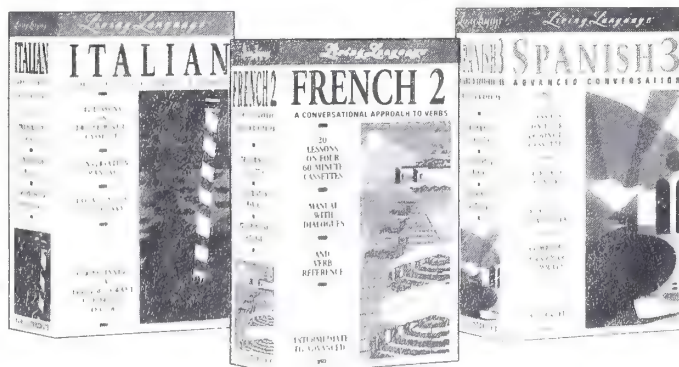
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delusions that are characteristic of Delusional Disorder (e.g., the FBI is tapping the family telephone and trailing family members when they go out). Usually the primary case in Shared Psychotic Disorder is dominant....

Jargon, redundancy, and turgidity aside, what we have here is a fairly accurate description of Newt Gingrich's House of Representatives. The billing code is 297.3.

This same uncanny, if accidental, ability to describe the nation's movers and shakers crops up again and again in the *DSM-IV*. Between them, Bill and Hillary Clinton meet all the diagnostic criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder.<sup>1</sup> And it is also clear that Bipolar Disorders I (296.01, 296.41, 296.42, 296.43, 296.44, 296.45, 296.46, 296.40) and II (296.89)—which include Manic Episode (296.00), Mixed Episode (296.61, 296.62, 296.63, 296.64, 296.65, 296.66, 296.60), and Hypomanic Episode (296.40)—may be combined with Antisocial Personality Disorder (301.7) to account for an inflated sense of personal brilliance, a willingness to play fast and loose with other people's money, an urge to instruct the nation, and an inability to foresee the consequences of one's actions. Closely associated maladies are, apparently, plagiarism and the wearing of inappropriate garb. By this definition, most of Wall Street is completely crackers.

Welcome to the broad pathological world of the ingenious, versatile Bipolars and their catchall allies, the Antisocial Personalities. In the vernacular, the Bipolars et al. come under the heading of *gotcha!*—the ever-popular rhetorical device of the ideologue or the man in the checkered suit with a briefcase full of shares in a phlogiston mine. For example, a telltale symptom of Antisocial Personality Disorder

is the tendency of the victim to steal things. The layman, the hard scientist, and the policeman might take issue with the diagnosis, but vigorous dissent (and what, pray tell, is the definition of "vigorous"?!) is a sure sign that the dissenter suffers from a Bipolar disorder and is therefore nuts. In other words, not only is anyone who pursues a goal with dedication, verve, and discipline a prime candidate for the therapist's couch but so is the psychiatrist who rises at a hospital staff meeting to protest the fact that her colleagues are ripping off everybody in sight with bogus diagnoses. One begins to understand what exceedingly handy tools these definitions be.

The Bipolars wear many hats and perform many useful functions, but, as the *DSM-IV* admits in a rare moment of candor, these disorders may not even exist. The numeral 6 at the end of the Bipolar billing codes (themselves such a source of rich cross-diagnostic possibilities that an entire subsection is devoted to them) indicates that the symptoms are in full remission, which means that the patient does not have them, may never have had them, and may never develop them. No matter—the therapist still gets paid.

**I**t was not ever thus. As recently as 1840, the U.S. census recognized precisely one form of madness, idiocy/insanity, omitting a definition because, presumably, everyone knew what it was. (In the 1840s, however, southern alienists anticipated the *DSM-IV* by discovering a malady called Drapetomania—the inexplicable, mad longing of a slave for freedom.) The 1880 census obligingly followed the march of science by listing no fewer than seven categories of dementia: mania, melancholia, monomania, paresis, dementia (again), dipsomania, and epilepsy. (This would not be the last time that a bald-facedly physical affliction crept into the psychological canon; among the maladies described in the *DSM-IV* is snoring, 780.59.) Even so, it cannot be said that the profession's urge to colonize the human mind proceeded at a blinding pace. The term "mental illness" did not enter the vocabulary for another forty years. Many decades would pass, and

much caution would be thrown to the winds, before things began to get really out of hand.

Following World War II, the U.S. Army and the Veterans Administration revisited the timeless discovery that the experience of battle did unpleasant things to the minds of its less participants. As a result, the number of known mental disturbances grew to a still-reasonable twenty-six. The *DSM-I* appeared in 1952; it was the first professional manual that attempted to describe, in a single concise volume, the disorders a clinician might encounter in the course of daily practice. The *DSM-I* also described the disorders as actual, discernible reactions to something—an event, a situation, a biological condition. But when the *DSM-II* was published in 1968, the word "reaction" had vanished, never to reappear. Unobserved by the larger world, a revolution had taken place. By severing cause from effect, the psychiatric profession had privatized the entire field of mental illness, removed it from the marketplace of ideas, abandoned the rigorous proofs of the scientific method, and adopted circular thinking as its central discipline. Henceforward, in the absence of cause and effect, a mental illness would be anything the psychiatric profession chose to call a mental illness. Increasingly, and with gathering speed, American psychiatry came to resemble a man with a hammer.

A defining moment, both for the profession and for the country, arrived with the publication in 1974 of the revised edition of the *DSM-II*, which abolished homosexuality as a mental illness. This was heartening news for a great many people, but they weren't quite off the hook. When the *DSM-III* was published in 1980, the world was informed that believing one's homosexuality to be a mental illness was now a mental illness (Ego-dystonic Homosexuality, 302), regardless, apparently, of where that belief might have originated.

For years, countless numbers of other people continued to be told that they suffered from a crippling disorder called dementia praecox, that women experienced penis envy, and that schizophrenia was caused by bad parents. By the time the *DSM-IV* rolled around in

<sup>1</sup> "1) has a grandiose sense of self-importance ...; 2) is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success ...; 3) believes that he or she is 'special' ...; 4) requires excessive admiration; 5) has a sense of entitlement ...; 6) is interpersonally exploitative ...; 7) lacks empathy, is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others; 8) is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him ...; 9) shows arrogant, haughty behavior or attitudes...."



These former truths were inoperative, and luck indeed to the thousands who had been convinced, in defiance of their senses, that they were either hopelessly off their chumps, rotten human beings, or both. The fact that so many people had been treated, punished, or stigmatized for conditions and circumstances that did not exist led to suggest to the public at large that modern psychotherapy had no idea what mental illness was. Nor did the tumbrels roll when the psychiatric profession went on to discover (and take a bundle from) two entirely new nation-threatening epidemics for which no empirical proof exists: chronic depression (based on the readily observable fact that a whole lot of people, including people with serious or potentially fatal diseases, don't feel so hot about their lives) and suppressed memory. The profession had discovered a truth as old as the Republic: no one ever went broke by turning a mote into a beam.

It's one thing for the psychological profession to defend itself against the slaughter of physical medicine and invite another for it to go on the attack. The widespread and disturbing tit for tat, the *DSM-IV* displays a tendency to claim dominion over afflictions that are clearly best handled by the harder scientists. Leaving aside such suspect tries as psychotic disorder caused by physical illness (293.82) and Vaginismus (306.51), a look at the section titled "Pain Disorder" is instructive. Pain Disorder comes in two billable forms: Pain Disorder Associated with Psychological Factors (307.80) and Pain Disorder with Both Psychological Factors and a General Medical Condition (307.89). Its variant form—Pain Disorder Associated with a General Medical Condition—seems to cede ground to the physicians, but subsequent text plainly reveals this to be a lure and an illusion:

Pain may lead to inactivity and social isolation, which in turn can lead to additional psychological problems (e.g., depression) and a reduction in physical endurance that results in fatigue and additional pain.

On the small chance that this bit of erdemain does not suffice, the text goes on to hint less subtly:

The associated mental disorders may precede the Pain Disorder (and possibly predispose the individual to it), co-occur with it, or result from it.

If your knee hurts, in other words, you have bats in your belfry.

Even when a problem has admittedly physical origins, the *DSM-IV* manages to argue that it, too, is treatable by the adepts of the psychological craft. With an audacity that would be shameless in another context, the book devotes an entire section to the psychological maladies caused by drugs prescribed to alleviate other, perhaps imaginary, psychological maladies. This is a little bit like receiving a bill from a virus. Elsewhere, the manual's logic shows a similar taste for the absurd, devoting almost a hundred pages to the discovery that chronic intoxication (a matter of keen interest to the *DSM-IV*) results from the ingestion of intoxicating substances (a matter of no visible interest to the *DSM-IV*) and often results in (but is not caused by) both crime and poverty. The poor, by the way, frequently suffer from impoverished vocabularies (Expressive Language Disorder, 315.31).

Nowhere is this strange conflation of cause and effect on more prominent display than in the passage entitled Reactive Attachment Disorder in Infancy or Early Childhood (313.89). "The child," we are informed,

shows a pattern of excessively inhibited, hypervigilant, or highly ambivalent responses (e.g., frozen watchfulness, resistance to comfort, or a mixture of approach and avoidance). . . . By definition, the condition is associated with grossly pathological care that may take the form of persistent disregard of the child's basic emotional needs for comfort, stimulation, and affection. . . .

Thirty-five thousand years of human history says that the kid is reacting logically to an intolerable situation. The *DSM-IV* says that the kid, like the drunk and the poor person, is not playing with a full deck. Neither is any other kid who hits the hormonal wall in the mid-teens, a condition well known to generations of parents whose darkest suspicions are confirmed by the *DSM-IV*'s version of the scientific method. Under the heading of "Disorders Usually First Diagnosed in Infancy, Childhood, or Adolescence,"

the *DSM-IV* lists Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (314.00, 314.01, and 314.9), Conduct Disorder (312.8), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (313.81), and Disruptive Behavior Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (312.9). A close reading of the text reveals that the illnesses in question consist of failure to listen when spoken to, talking back, annoying other people, claiming that somebody else did it, and (among a lot of other stuff familiar to parents) failure to clean up one's room. According to the *DSM-IV*, adolescence is a mental disorder.

At this point in the proceedings it is time for the standard author's disclaimer. First, a number, perhaps even a large number, of practicing therapists are sensible, upstanding citizens who never cheat on their expense accounts and who know perfectly well that poor people aren't crazy. The problem is finding out who these therapists are. The *DSM-IV* lists as contributors many of the most stellar names in the profession, and the daunting task of weeding out misguided, deluded, corrupt, or stupid therapists doesn't even begin to address the legions of social workers, lawyers, nurses, administrators, and jumped-up file clerks who use the *DSM-IV* as a kind of Cliffs Notes while filling out paperwork and blackening countless reputations with descriptions of illnesses that do not exist.

Next, and obviously, there actually is such a thing as mental illness. Any form of normal human thought or behavior carried to a grotesque extreme and persisting despite all appeals to reason is, by definition, a mental illness. The *DSM-IV*, however, appears to be unaware of this. The manual's lengthy discussion of schizophrenia (295.30, 295.10, 295.20, 295.90, and 295.60), surely one of the most studied pathologies ever to afflict the mind of man, boils down to this: a schizophrenic is a person who thinks very odd thoughts, behaves weirdly, and suffers from bizarre delusions, which suggests that the authors of the *DSM-IV* either don't know what schizophrenia is or suffer from poor writing skills (315.2). Hard science has developed compelling evidence that



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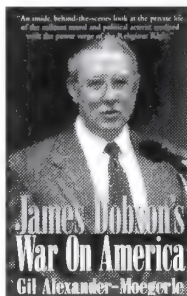
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schizophrenia, like appendicitis, is something that its victims cannot talk out of, but one begins to suspect that the entire strangely imprecise fiction has been composed with the wisdom of the serpent: if the DSM-IV were to admit that schizophrenia is in all probability a physical illness with profound mental consequences, the game would no longer be worth the candle.

Nowhere in the DSM-IV is a station of sanity defined or described, and a therapist is therefore given no guidance concerning therapy's goal. In the DSM-IV's own terms, sanity appears to be the absence of everything in its pages. And for all their effort to sweep every known disturbance of mankind under psychology's jurisdictional rug, the book's authors seem to have overlooked a few real moneymakers. A number of people believe, for example, that they have been abducted by intergalactic superbeings and subjected to fiendish experiments, but because the DSM-IV never describes this condition, there is nothing at all wrong with such people. A person who sneezes or travels incognito is ready for the booby hatch, but a person who claims to have been kidnapped by a flying saucer is perfectly sane.

Well, almost. Perhaps he is "agitated," in which case it would be reasonable to treat him for "agitation" (as bill his insurance company accordingly). Is he depressed about the incident? If so, perhaps he has gone Bipolar. And the saucer story could, of course be read as a schizophrenic delusion. The possibilities are various.

This, in the end, is the beauty of the DSM-IV. Hangnails seem to have avoided the amoeba's kiss, and the common cold is momentarily safe (unless it is accompanied by pain), but precious little else is. As psychiatry fines its definitions with an eye toward profit, piling Pelion on Ossa like a playwright dressing a set, the human mind becomes increasingly less comprehensible, not more. If every aspect of human life (excepting, of course, the practice of psychiatry) can be labeled as pathology, then everything human beings thought they knew, believed, or had deduced about their world is consigned to the dustbin of history, to line on an insurance form.



# PANTALONE

By Steven Polansky

**“D**o you know what scares me?” she said. We were in my office, a small space, the walls hung with masks of carved wood, leather, and papier-mâché. The door was closed.

“What scares you?” I said.

“When one character speaks with another character’s voice.”

“They do that in cerebals.”

“No,” she said. “They do it to deceive them. To trap them. In the movie. To kill them. All the fucking devils do it.”

**I** want to say now that she was beautiful, extraordinarily so, from almost every angle. At first—I was forty, she was twenty—I found her appearance pitiable and painful. Her face was asymmetrical: the right side—the jaw, mouth, corner of the eye, nostril, brow—misshapen,

Steven Polansky is a writer living in Orono, Minnesota.



skewed, the issue of a pubescent neurological miscue and a string of cruelly ineffectual surgeries. The left side of her face was sadly perfect, as was the rest of her. As I got closer, I saw the golden hair on the back of her neck. I could list her elegances: her white shoulders; the fragile V made by the bones beneath her neck; her sheer, clean back; her arms, her feathery wrists; her ankles. I never saw her undressed. I never touched her.

Were she to read it, she would

chafe, or laugh, at my description. She would say, rightly, it is idealized, sentimental, self-serving. I don't know that there was anything really elegant about her. Maybe, when you spent time with her, she was, excepting the disfigurement, an ordinarily pretty young woman, with the predictable, seductive mix of fine and coarse, with every sign that she would become, again putting aside the disfigurement, a passably attractive middle-aged woman, whose calves were a bit thick,

whose hands a trace rough and utile.

She used too much makeup, and a vulgar nail polish. In dress and deportment she was a studied dissonance, declining to the tawdry in a way hard to reconcile with her manifest graces. She had a gecko—curled upon itself, small and green, with one red eye—tattooed on her shoulder.

**I**f it serves me now to see her as sultry and provocative, a young



woman who, at least at first, did not suffer—and literally less of her—had at least come away with a heightened, if not compensatory, sense of her own body—its allures, its cadences, the will to transcend the space

looked at me. I had spoken, belittlingly, of another student. I had stooped, pandered, breached a minimal decorum. While it doubtless pleased this student with the unexceptionally pretty face, it also less-

as flattery, palaver. She liked it, and it made her angry. She pulled her hair back and showed me her profile.

"Like this?"

"Yes," I said.

"And you're a liar."

She flared into an aggressive smile that showed her teeth. Immediately, she regretted having done it and lowered her head.

"I was beautiful. I should have been beautiful."

We sat without speaking, then she stood up, as if she were preparing to leave.

"I have something for you," I said. I had not thought about this before I said it. I went to the wall of books behind her. "Something I want you to read."

"What is it?" she said. She belatedly slumped, shoulders buckling, shoulders sagging, head drooping. "Because I'm swamped."

I had no book in mind. I was improvising. On a shelf above my head I saw Salinger's *Nine Stories* and, grateful, reached for it. I handed her the book. She looked at it, then handed it back.

"I've read it."

"Good," I said. "Did you like it?"

"I liked it." She smiled at me, gently, but without covering her mouth. "I know what you're doing."

"What am I doing?"

"You're trying to soften me up."

You're trying to melt my gristly little heart with go-

## I SUPPOSE I WANT HER STORY TO BE PRECISELY THE EPISODES IN WHICH I FIGURE I DID FIND HER, AND I DID HELP HER, AT A TIME WHEN SHE WAS HURT AND ANGRY, CYNICAL AND CONFUSED

around it—this was not at all how I first saw her.

I was in the college coffee shop having lunch with one of my students. I don't remember this one's name, or what we talked about. I remember little about her except that she was pretty and had rendered a distressingly leaden Smeraldina in the college's staging of Goldoni's *Servant of Two Masters*, my translation suffering its first, and last, mounting.

She walked by. She was alone. She stood at the counter to order her lunch. Although she was in her final year, I had not seen her before. She moved as if she were pinched, strapped by shame. She kept her head tilted, so that her hair obscured the right, unseemly side of her face. Yet she was dressed in a way calculated to draw attention—tight jeans, heels, a man's white, sleeveless undershirt. There, conspicuously, were her smooth arms, her shoulders, her breasts, the nape of her neck, her flawless back. This now-see-me-now-don't-rhetoric made no sense to me then. It was, I would learn—because she would teach me—the way she brazened it out and, at the same time, a submission to the instinct for self-abasement, which in her was punishing and persistent.

"Bullshit," she would say. "I taught you nothing. I taught you fuck-all."

I said this aloud to Smeraldina facing me across the table: "Dear God. Don't let that woman take my class."

Before she responded, Smeraldina

enched me in her eyes. That didn't matter. At forty, I was already becoming invisible to the undergraduate female.

"What woman?" Smeraldina said.

"At the counter."

"Oh," she said. "Yeah. I know her." I waited. "I mean, I know about her."

"I'm sure she's lovely," I said, backstepping before the next betrayal. "I just don't have it in me to cope with that."

"That face."

"That pain," I said.

"She's not lovely," Smeraldina said. "By the way."

"You're wrong," she said. "I'm no more than I would have been. I'm less."

She closed her eyes. She threw her head back, exposing the pleat of scar tissue under her jaw. "Not for me," I said. We were in my office. It was late afternoon. My wife was ill. I should have been home.

She laughed at me, a derisive snort. She was in many ways my better—we both knew it. Still, when she laughed, she covered her mouth with her hand. "What could you possibly know?" she said.

"I know what I see." She licked her thumb, then rubbed at a spot of ink on her index finger. Without looking at me, she said, "My mother told me I was beautiful. Always. How beautiful I would be. Then she stopped."

"You are beautiful."

"Oh yeah."

"I find you beautiful."

I meant what I said. She took it

I want her story—the episodes in which I figure—to be the one about the compassionate, excusably self-congratulatory teacher who helps the teetering student find her power, her voice, her way. I suppose I want her story to be precisely the episodes in which I figure. I did find her, and I did help her, at a time when she was hurt and angry, cynical and confused and listening to a stop. I took an interest. I was frank, even playful about her distress. I talked to her about her face. I was never over my grave. Such frankness, such playfulness, was solacing and cost me



most nothing. I encouraged her to talk, and I listened. I had done as much for other students in crises nominal and real, though I would say now I never had another student like her.

I did not save her. She would not have allowed herself to be saved by me. When I let her go, when she left—I could not have held her—she was more confident, straighter to the world, more at peace with, more lured about, her sadness, her lot. I had a reasonable cause to think it was partly a result of her brush with me.

I was anxious the first day of class, ways, even after fifteen years in the business. She was in the front row, to my left, next to the window. Of her face only the perfect side was visible, but I knew it was she. When I saw her sitting there, self-conscious, nervy, watching me sideways, I felt a special anxiety, edged by promise and reprieve. Since my abstract prayer, I had held a hope that she would take my class, that I would have the chance not only to cope with but to help palliate her pain.

I began the term, as I did whatever the advertised subject, with the question of voice. I explained that I was set on helping all of them find an authentic voice with which to speak and write, and, more importantly, with which to think. I told them that the moment of putting pen to paper was too late to think about the character of this voice, that it was determined, for good or ill, by the thousand daily choices he made. This last idea, and the language in which I dressed it, was not mine. I had read it, posited just that way, in an essay written by a beautiful young poet whose work, and whose face on the dust jacket, I admired.

"Consider," I said, "the choices you make in the way you dress. Can we read the language—vocabulary, diction—of the clothes you wear?" This embellishment was my own. It didn't logically follow. It was gratuitous really; and the exercise it prefaced, cruel. I pointed to a young man sitting at the back of the room. He was collapsed in his chair, nearly re-

cumbent, with his baseball cap drawn over his eyes. He was not asleep; at intervals he spat out the side of his mouth, into a paper cup he held in his hand, a wet stream of tobacco.

"What is your name?" I asked him.

Without altering his posture, he said, "Van."

"Van," I said. "Would you mind standing up?"

This was the pedagogy of co-optation.

"No," he said. "I wouldn't mind." He stood up, after discharging another clot of chew.

"All right," I said to the class, "here's Van." The rest turned in their chairs to look at him. She looked out the window.

"Look at his clothes. Remember, I'm asking you not to judge but to read them. Is this okay with you, Van?"

"Makes no difference," Van said.

"Good," I said. "So. What is the idiom, the nature of the language they speak? Can someone characterize it?"

Several hands went up.

"Yes?" I said.

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"Rough," a student said.

"Plain," a student said.

"Casual."

"Good," I said.

"Cool."

"As in . . . ?" I said.

"As in cool."

"All right," I said, "that's good. You can sit down now, Van. Thank you."

"No sweat," Van said. He slid back into his chair. Still she had not looked at him.

"Stay with me," I said. "Based on Van's choice of clothes, based on that idiom, that vocabulary, what inferences might you want to draw about his voice?"

"Subliterate, inarticulate, unregenerate, pithecanthropoc, pencil-dicked, and dumbfuck," she said later, "is what I would have said, if you'd called on me."

"I'm glad I didn't," I said. But I had called on her, when we had finished with Van: "By the window, Miss, would you mind standing up?"

I told myself that by choosing her to participate in this public exercise I was asserting I could see no reason to except her. There must have been kindness in this. She did not move, and the class was quiet. She shifted in her seat and looked me flat in the eye. She smiled, as if to say, "You think this is cruel."

Then she stood up.

I had made a mistake, but it was too late to amend it.

She turned around and looked at the class. Van sat up straight. No one else moved.

She wore a white bustier with filigrees of cheap lace, a black Lycra miniskirt, black spandex leggings, and black leather ankle boots with pointed toes. In one ear she had three earrings; on her wrists, a mass of jangly silver bracelets. She did not always dress this way. Often, when she came to my office, she wore a simple floral sundress or a man's broadcloth shirt.

"All right," I said. "Here's a different idiom. What inferences do you draw about Miss . . . I'm sorry. What is your name?"

She put her hands on her hips and assumed a posture of defiance. She did not respond. For a moment I

worried she might also be deaf.

"Lindy," she said, without taking her eyes off the class. Her name was not Lindy, it turned out, but Margaret.

"Are you okay with this, Lindy."

She did not look at me.

"Go on," she said. "Do it."

"Okay," I said. "So, now, as you read the language of Lindy's clothes, what are you led to think about her voice?"

No one said anything. She remained standing. I waited a full minute. No one said a word.

"You understand what I'm asking?"

A few of the students nodded. She stared at the class, her hands on her hips.

After another minute I said, "This is difficult."

She laughed, covering her mouth.

No one spoke.

"Well, then," I said. "Perhaps we'd better move on. Thank you, Lindy."

She did not sit down.

"Lindy," I said. "Thank you."

She would not sit. For ten minutes, until our time was up, she stood facing the class. I did what I could. I wrote on the board the assignment for the next class. I asked for questions. None of it had an effect. She did not sit down or take her eyes off me. None of the students spoke. None would look at her.

When it was over, they left quickly.

We were alone. She sat down and began to gather her things.

"I am sorry," I said.

She looked at me. "You are now," she said.

**M**y office. Late afternoon. The curtain is drawn. There are masks on the wall. The Dottore, Pulcinella, Pantalone, Scapin. An expressive Arlecchino from the workshop of Donato Sartori, a black leather neutral mask worn by Jacques Lecoq, and a framed engraving of a scene from the Balli di Sfessania.

"It is hard to be smart," she said, "when you forever feel your face. When every second of every day you feel it stretched across your bones like this ugly rubber thing."

"I had terrible skin," I told her, "when I was in school."

"This is an analogy?"

"Of a sort," I said.

"I should punch your lights out."

"I'm sorry," I said.

"Just so you know," she said.

Her deformity was, for me, no longer repellent. It was painful to look at because it spoke so clearly of her pain, but there was nothing freakish about her. I came to find her face, its wryness, pleasing.

"I used to be gifted," she said, if you want to talk about that. I was smart. I was funny. I wrote poetry I played the flute."

"I would like to hear you play."

"Oh sure. That would be nice. Look at my mouth, for God's sake."

I asked about her family. She was not unwilling to speak of them. They lived outside Chicago. Her father had been a minor player in the Board of Trade. With the onset of Margaret's disorder, he left his job and the family. Margaret had not seen him again. She spoke about him with dispassion.

"You're not angry," I said.

"Well, I broke his heart."

Margaret's mother, who drew no financial support from her absent husband, made dresses for dolls. I thought of Dickens, but Margaret's mother was ambitious and fully modern. She had converted the basement of their house into a small factory, with two part-time helpers, four industrial sewing machines, a snap machine, a cutting table, and steel shelves filled, floor to ceiling, with bolts of fabric. She sold the clothes at craft shows. They were better off than they'd been when Margaret's father was around: on a good weekend, Margaret told me, her mother made two to three thousand dollars.

"Net," she said.

"Remarkable," I said.

"She's good," she said. "Other people copy her designs, because they're easy to produce. She started with Barbie, who's a real pain. She's tiny and built and you need to get darts in there. Now she does the American Girl, which is a bigger doll, fewer pieces, simpler pattern. The body is easy, like a little girl."



you can charge more.”  
met her mother. She was not  
at I expected. She had none of  
Margaret’s grace. She was raw and  
sloppy, the kind of woman you’d see  
in a VFW hall. Her face was gray,  
her voice smoky, her hands meaty  
and hard.

“I’d help her pick out colors,”  
Margaret told me. “I’d tell her what  
to wear. Sometimes I’d design a dress.  
I’d do it, and I’d want it. She’d  
make me buy it, work it off. I’d get  
rejection for free, though. Or when  
she was sewing a new pattern, she’d  
make me the first try.”

Her head sagged, and she closed  
her eyes.

“You’re sleepy,” I said.

“How can you tell?” she said. “I  
can’t sleep.”

She sat with her eyes closed. The  
light through my office window was  
faded and cool. She dozed. I sat quietly  
and tried not to look at her. I  
should have been home.

After a time, her eyes still closed,  
she said, “She made my prom  
dress.”

“And?”

“It was beautiful.” She looked up  
at me. “What?”

“Nothing,” I said.

“Oh,” she said. “Fuck you. I went  
to the prom.”

The day Margaret graduated,  
which was ten years ago and the last  
time I saw her, her mother took a picture  
of the two of us standing outside the  
cathedral. We were in regalia, mine de-  
finitely more elaborate. I had my  
arm around her. It was hot. I have  
a picture; her mother mailed me a  
copy, with a note I did not keep,  
thanking me for all I had done for  
her daughter. I am looking at Mar-  
garet, with my lips perhaps too close  
to the top of her head. I am forty in  
this picture but look older. My  
face—face, beard, hair—is shaped  
like the continent of Africa. My col-  
or is off. I am blown and pasty and  
kempt. I am showing too many  
teeth. Margaret is photogenic. Her  
face is true. She has learned how to  
pose herself to the camera.

“I am for you,” she told me, “a  
black girl. Chinese. Extraterrestrial.  
The Queen of fucking Sheba.”

“You’ve lost me,” I said.

“I’m exotic. A fantasy. But I’m  
better.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You can want me,” she said. “At  
the same time, you can pity me.”

“I don’t want you,” I said.

“You do.” She smiled. With her  
finger she lightly touched the tip of  
my nose. “You’re beside yourself.  
And you tell yourself you’re doing  
me a good, gallant turn, paying at-  
tention to me, giving me some ten-  
derness.”

“This is malarkey,” I said.

“You couldn’t pity a black girl. Or  
a Chinese one. They would resent  
it.”

“I don’t pity you.”

“You do. I don’t resent it.”

**A**t the end of the term she pro-  
duced an essay. It was work not done  
for the course. Although she was  
regular, and responsive, in her visits  
to my office, she declined, without  
explanation or apology, to do any of  
the assignments and, after the first  
day, would not speak in class. I kept  
the essay.

#### HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION

You’d like me to find my voice.

Let’s have a listen.

In this essay I will tell how I spent  
my summer.

I spent my summer in a rathole  
trailer, in a rathole trailer court, in  
rathole North Dakota, with my shit-  
hole boyfriend—let’s call him Zippy—  
and his schizo mother, the vermin  
queen, let’s call her Mom.

I will now describe the accommo-  
dations.

The accommodations were not  
plush. They were indeed fetid.

By this one means they were  
cramped, precluding modesty, they  
were dirty, precluding cleanliness,  
they were noisy, precluding rest, and  
they stank.

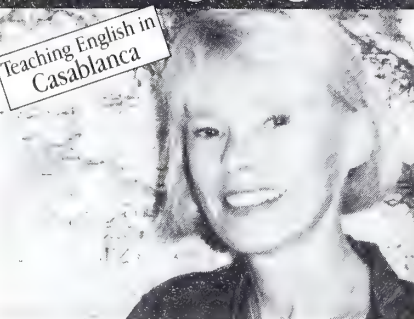
Mom, about whom Kid Zip did not  
warn me, was given to bouts of drink  
and aftermathy paroxysms of brutality,  
and she stunk.

There were no windows and/or  
vistas.

The scabrous object of my affec-  
tion, viz. Zippy de Doodah, left daily  
at daybreak to wrench and ratchet  
and render his fingernails unsightlier.  
Upon his crepuscular return, the  
young master used to stick one, or  
two, or three of his fingers up my

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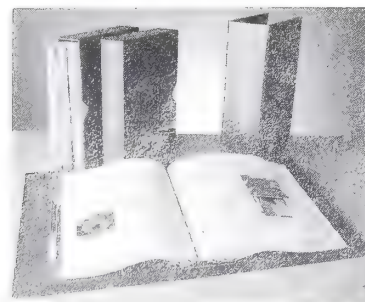
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### NOTES FOR "PROJECTILES"

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CLUES: 1. hat-h(er); 2. fur(r)ry; 3. jibe, two mngs.; 4. eros, rev.; 5. rein-a; 6. m(a)m(a)'s; 7. suite, homonym; 8. scene, homonym; 9. tura, hidden; 10. (d)omino; 11. worst, homonym; 12. tre(m)ble; 13. orange; 14. MIT-ten; 15. posses(s); 16. anthem; 17. rubber, two mngs.; 18. de(ce)it, rev.; 19. psyche, two mngs.; 20. sinned, rev.; 21. lenses\*; 22. do-ssier\*; 23. stardom\*; 24. caption\*; 25. ghoulisn\*; 26. est(IV)ate; 27. fron(t)tier; 28. (s)tripping; 29. torn-ados(rev.); 30. re-pesto; 31. strata, rev.; 32. bar(O-me)ter; 33. price-less, pun; 34. sa(turn-in)e\*; 35. calculation\*. ACROSS: A. sores\*-t; B. art(Dor) ... two mngs.; C. stam-mer, hidden; D. (D)on't, sten(rev.)-ch; E. emir, rev.; F. rain, homonym; G. leader, two mngs. DOWN: M. gentian\*; N. Astro-\*; O. t(ea)ry; P. mousser\*; Q. jaded, two mngs.; R. woovers\*; S. shares\*; T. retied\*; U. sinful, hidden; V. rating, two mngs.; W. (s)tern; X. stammer, hidden.

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SI	PI	RA	I	S	FK	S	N	II	LC	RU
N	SS	EB	II	ED	S	A	D	I	IB	ER

cunt, viz. my tender, perfectly for nether parts, regardless, he, o state of his nubs, greasy and snag they without exception were. I him poke and slash. Then dinner.

Mom did not work outside home. She did not leave the plush place. She did get the wear and the food stamps for the food.

I was not what she'd expected. I was not pretty. I was not nice. I was smart and verbal. I was, as the world has heretofore noted, cocke gargoylish, but she was a crude d fuck, and I would not let her pitye.

I was alone in a tin can with a blessed vermin mother. I did wa could to help. I washed the dish, vacuumed the floor. I picked up Zippy's little room, taking care to ad the spuz on the sheets. I did the dry. I wiped the commode. She around all day in Zippy's room, played Nintendo. I shall illustrat point: she played Nintendo. Alah did was boil meat. Meat, meat, na Meat everywhere. With gelatin gravy.

She was scared of me. At first cause she didn't understand what son was doing with me, but by then because I was acting like a lunatic will be discussed below.

We did not talk. She would ner swer. She spoke only to say the cruel thing about Zippy. The boy fecal matter, but I wouldn't give the satisfaction. She told Zippy I bitch who had rejected her atte at friendship.

Zippy would, of an evening, come home at six. A poke and a slash, then, then he'd get drunk. I'd have get drunk, too, otherwise he was too tedious.

Once she called me Quasimodo. I was impressed.

The arrangement was not work out. My hostess for the season we of her guest.

I took a telemarketing job in a dummy bank that ran a credit card scam. I dialed the phone and said the same thing 400 times a day, quit. "Hi. My name's Margaret. I'm can from the Bank of Baloney Credit Card Center, and we just want to make sure it's all right if we sent out a free display of Visa and MasterCard applications for your customer. There is no charge, and we will pay your business five dollars for every completed application we receive. Would that be all right?" I'd change my voice, depending on whether a man or woman answered. With e



d go debutante and creamy, like I was right then having slow, sweet sex. or the women I'd sound young and nsure of myself so they'd feel sorry or me. My voice (not "my voice") as gender-unspecifically irresistible.

Our lists were generated by computer. For three straight days I called abortion clinics. We smoked together, my female associate lowlifes and I, outside on break. They all had kids, and all the kids were sick. One of the nkes had cancer, and one of them had something nobody could diagnose.

With regard to hate, I hated the mother of Zippy. I wanted her to die. I wanted her, in other words, dead. I planned initially to fray her brake lines. Then I planned to go into her bedroom and beat the bejeezus out of her, thrash her bareknuckled or club her with the Nintendo. Then I'd go to work, on the assumption that if you say you didn't do something, there's little chance of anyone proving you did.

Before I could strike, she called my mother and told her I had to go. She had remembered some family commitments. My mother's response to this psychosis was to summon me home. But I refused to leave. I stayed a week and took my revenge.

Here are examples of what I did to give the old bag out:

1) I quit telemarketing and stayed home with her all day. I did nothing. I sat in Zippy's little room with the stereo cranked up. I didn't clean. The place fell apart.

2) I ate all the food in the trailer, passing her slowly on the way to and from the refrigerator, my arms loaded down with grub.

3) I sat in the back seat of her car whenever she went anywhere and, with my evil eye, stared at her in the rearview mirror.

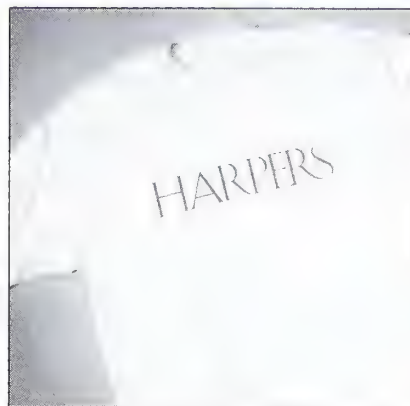
4) When she was on the phone I'd walk right up to her, get real close, my face next to hers, and shout, "I need to use the phone."

5) I left half-empty pop cans, with cockers of spit in them, everywhere.

6) When she got angry, I was deure.

7) The two small bedrooms were separated by a sheet of beaverboard. When we fucked, Zip and I, which I now insisted we do three times a night, I screamed like a banshee. Also let him come inside me.

By the end of the week, the old tipperoo, who had begun to try my patience, fell in behind his mommy



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# "Sacrifices for Peace"

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There is persistent pressure on Israel to bring "sacrifices for peace." It is understood that these "sacrifices" refer to greater "flexibility" in dealing with the Arabs, but mean primarily that Israel should allow its dismemberment, in order to bring peace to the region.

## What are the facts?

**A Bizarre Concept.** The concept to bring "sacrifices for peace" is a new one that has never before found application in world history. It was created by Arab propaganda to induce Israel to agree to its dismemberment, to give strategic assets to those who are determined to destroy it.

Since its creation in 1948, Israel has been subjected to almost constant Arab terror, to unceasing Arab aggression, and to three major wars. In the Six-Day War, it recovered its heartland of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem; it captured the Golan Heights from Syria, which had been used for decades to shell and spread terror over much of northern Israel; and it conquered Gaza and the Sinai Desert that had been used by Egypt as staging ground and invasion route to Israel.

**Many Sacrifices for Peace.** In order to achieve peace with its neighbors, Israel brought sacrifices for peace that have no precedent in the history of the world. For peace with Egypt, Israel returned the entire Sinai. There is little thanks on the part of Egypt for this generosity and this sacrifice for peace. The controlled Egyptian press spews daily anti-Israel venom. President Mubarak has never visited Jerusalem. It is the coolest possible peace. A sacrifice for peace brought in vain—probably a major act of folly on the part of Israel.

Israel made sacrifices for peace by signing a peace treaty with Jordan. In that

peace, Israel granted Jordan a large yearly allowance of fresh water from its own dwindling and meager resources and accepted a petty demand for "border rectification"—yielding of land. As for Syria, no offered sacrifice for peace seems to be sufficient to satisfy its dictator, President Hafez Assad. He is unwilling to consider even an ice-cold peace, except for Israel's total surrender of the Golan Heights. Fortunately, under the current Israeli government such a surrender is not in the cards.

The greatest sacrifice for peace that Israel has brought was the resuscitation of the bankrupt and moribund PLO terror organization and the acceptance of it "chairman"

Yasser Arafat as a negotiating partner. In this ill-advised process, foisted on Israel by world pressure and by its previous government, Israel has made far-reaching and existential sacrifices and concessions. It has yielded control of the Gaza Strip and of all major "West Bank" cities

to the Palestinian Authority and has agreed to detailed plans to grant further autonomy to the Palestinians. In what is probably the ultimate folly in this process, Israel has tolerated the formation of a Palestinian "police force" (actually an army) of 40,000 men—the largest police-to-population ratio in the world (!)—and has equipped this "police force" with a complete arsenal of automatic weapons. As the world now knows, these weapons were turned on Israeli soldiers and civilians at the very first opportunity that the Palestinian leaders provoked.

Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police."

The Arab countries, not Israel, are killing peace in the Middle East. The PLO, apart from the bloody crimes that it has committed against Israel, has now established a virtual dictatorship in the territory allotted to it. In Egypt, thousands of Copts have been killed and their churches burned. President Assad of Syria has occupied Lebanon and has killed and tortured thousands. Iraq, under its dictator Saddam Hussein, is a rogue state attacking its neighbors and killing its own citizens. Saudi Arabia is a monarchical tyranny. Sudan is engaged in the systematic slaughter and enslavement of its black African people. How strange that nobody asks the Palestinians or any of the Arab states to bring any sacrifices for peace. Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police." Billy clubs are good enough for London Bobbies. Why should any more be needed to patrol Nablus, Hebron and Bethlehem?

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and refused to talk to me. Now there's nothing. He would no longer poke and/or slash, as had formerly been his wont.

I need complete attention paid to me at all times, in all places.

So, in conclusion, I left.

I had failed my wife, in a general way, from the start. We had been married twenty years; what should there have been? Margaret. Still, though it was not of a strictly sexual nature, it was infidelity that brought the end of our marriage and the beginning of what became for me a nearly incapacitating despair. A superior attention, a faithfulness in the details of my wife's illness, and of focus and stamina. Margaret played a role in this, however unwitting.

I said to her, "I read your essay." It was the last time she came to my office.

I shrink when I think about what followed.

She stood up. She took the black leather mask off the wall. Without looking back to me she put the mask over her face, then turned slowly around.

I had seen this mask worn in a performance. I had worn it myself.

On her the mask was scary. I didn't know what she was up to. I didn't know what to say. I should have stayed quiet.

"What you have there," I said, "is a neutral mask. It was made by Jacques Lecoq."

She did not respond.

"A neutral mask," I said, "has neither specific expression nor character. It is neither sad nor happy, neither laughs nor weeps. It depends on silence." I went on. "It emphasizes the intention of the character who wears it, and the situation makes explicit the gestures of the body."

She stood absolutely still.

"And the tone of the voice."

She did not speak.

"It lifts the text above the everyday. It filters out the essential, drops the anecdotal. It renders the body."

Her stare was fixed on me and unblinking.

"It is unimaginable that the text



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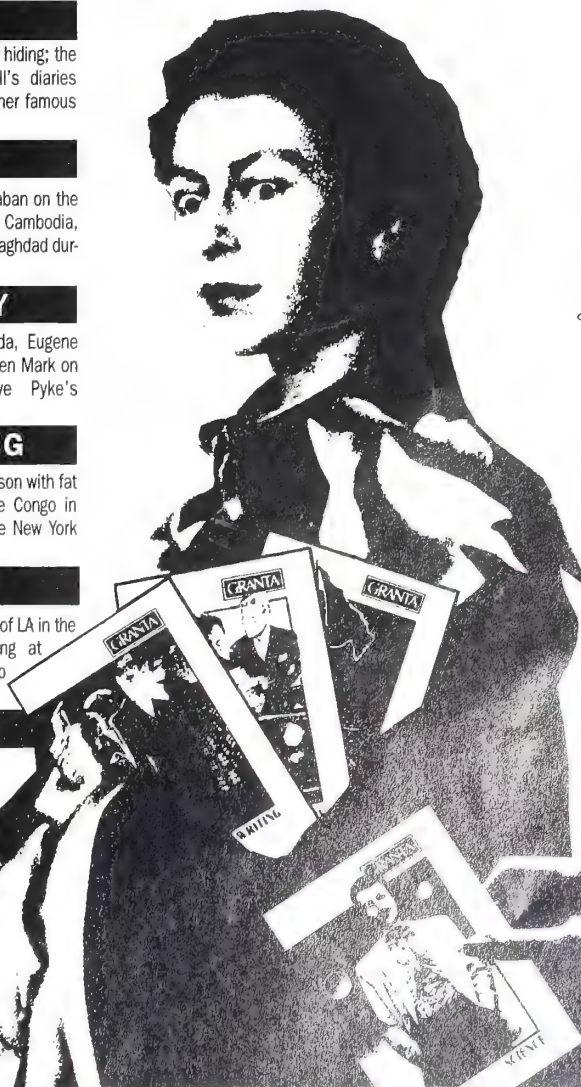
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tral mask could be named, say, Zippy, and could wake up in his bed. With you beside him."

I can only imagine what I would have said next had she not spoken.

She took off the mask.

"I don't want you to see me," she said.

**T**his was ten years ago. I am not who I was, nor what I might have been. Since my divorce, I have been celibate and lonely. My ex-wife has remarried. When I see her, she is cool, wary, though not wholly without compassion. She says she pities me.

I wrote Margaret several letters in the intervening years. She replied briefly to the first; she did not answer the others. I do not know if they reached her.

I have continued to teach, and have grown increasingly disaffected. The enterprise has become for me a kind of purgatory. Shortly after Margaret graduated—I believe this an index more chronological than causal—I began to resent my students. I resented them for the time they took from me, though I had little else to do. I am now roundly unappealing to the female students, and resent them for this. The male students, whom I never much liked, seem newly obtuse. The lot of them bore me. I have decamped, I suppose, leaving vacant a place behind the face my students see, behind the voice they hear. The face I see is older and wooden; the voice I hear is unnerved and tinny.

Recently, I was in Louisville, at the Seelbach Hotel. I was there for the Commedia Festival, in which I retained a pallid, vestigial interest. It was two in the morning, and, as was lately the case, I could not sleep. I turned on the radio beside the bed and heard her voice. At first I was not sure. Then, with the station's call letters, she said her name.

I did not recognize, or like, the music she played—what she called "progressive rock." Between songs, she talked. I sat down on the bed facing the radio.

Although I knew it was her voice,

it was not the voice I'd know. What I heard in my hotel room was assured, finished, without quiver, without edge. There was no touch of sadness in it, or pain. It was fluent and sexy. Safe. If I did not know her, I wondered, how could I possibly imagine her?

After an hour, I called the station. I waited for the music to start, then dialed. She answered.

"Yes?" she said.

"Hello," I said.

"Hello," she said. "Who is this?"

"Margaret," I said.

For what seemed a long time, she did not speak. I wasn't sure if she was still on the line. I thought about her sitting at a console filled with meters and dials.

"Margaret," I said. "Please."

Then, with a calm and perfect anger, she said, "Who is this?"

## February Index Sources

1 Richard Fowles, University of Utah (Salt Lake City); 2,3 RAND (Santa Monica, Calif.); 4,5 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (Washington); 6 Center for Defense Information (Washington); 7 Business Alliance for International Economic Development (Washington); 8 National Association of Agricultural Markets (Mexico City); 9,10 North American Development Bank (San Antonio); 11,12 Thomas A. Watts-Fitzgerald, Assistant U.S. Attorney (Miami); 13,14 David Coursey, University of Chicago; 15 Bala Research Group, Ltd. (Glendale, Calif.); 16 Kruse International (Auburn, Ind.); 17 Executive Collectibles (Newport Beach, Calif.); 18 Mark Kleiman, UCLA; 19 Internet Access News (San Francisco); 20 Tochigi Prefectural Government (Utsunomiya City, Japan); 21 Limestone Correctional Facility (Capshaw, Ala.); 22 Minor Planet Center (Cambridge, Mass.); 23 Double XXposure, Inc. (N.Y.C.); 24 Taperware Corporation (Orlando, Fla.); 25 Bil Keane (Laguna Beach, Calif.); 26,27 Department of State Licensing Service (Albany)/Department of Health (Albany); 28 American Viewpoint, Inc. (Alexandria, Va.); 29 Schwartz Public Relations (N.Y.C.); 30 Chicago Academy of Sciences; 31 National Commission on Teaching (N.Y.C.); 32 Public Agenda (N.Y.C.); 33 Office of Senator Ron Wyden; 34 Office of Senator Robert Byrd; 35 Otis Elevator Company (Farmington, Conn.); 36 United Network for Organ Sharing (Richmond, Va.); 37 Anatomical Chart Company (Skokie, Ill.); 38,39 New England Confectionery Company (Cambridge, Mass.)



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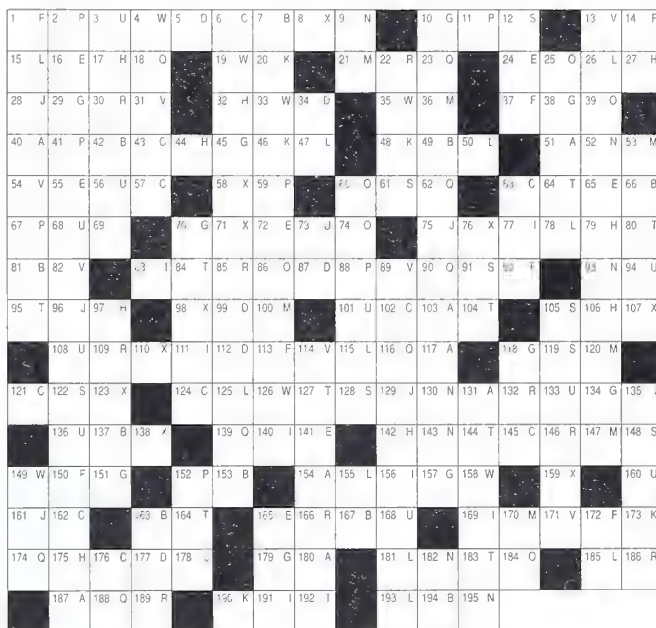




# DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 170

By Thomas H. Middleton

The diagram, when filled in, will contain a quotation from a published work. The numbered squares in the diagram correspond to the numbered blanks under the WORDS. The WORDS form an acrostic: the first letter of each spells the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken. The letter in the upper right-hand corner of each square indicates the WORD containing the letter to be entered in that square. Contest rules and the solution to last month's puzzle appear on page 72.



## CLUES

## WORDS

- A. Leave a launch pad (of a rocket) (2 wds.)  
51 117 131 103 154 180 40  
187
- B. Reviving, restoring to good condition, renewal  
66 7 137 167 81 194 153 42  
163 49
- C. They furnish equipment  
124 102 6 145 176 162 121 57  
43 63
- D. Herds, large crowds  
34 5 99 112 87 177
- E. Incited (2 wds.)  
72 16 165 141 24 65 55
- F. Grow abundantly (2 wds.)  
172 14 92 1 113 150 37
- G. Infra dig (2 wds.)  
118 45 151 157 10 179 38 134  
29 70
- H. "O'er uninhabitable downs / Place \_\_\_\_ for want of towns" (Swift, "On Poetry")  
27 175 17 142 106 32 44 79  
97
- I. Unrestrained fun (2 wds.)  
191 111 77 140 169 83 135 156  
69
- J. "\_\_\_\_ I" (3 wds.; Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited*, "Author's Note")  
129 28 178 75 161 96
- K. Unpleasant, disagreeable  
173 48 46 190 20
- L. "\_\_\_\_ with a hole in it, sir," says Sam Weller (4 wds.; Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*)  
15 115 26 193 78 47 155 50  
125 185 181

- M. Russian count, novelist, and philosopher (1828-1910; "What Is Art?")  
120 170 53 147 100 21 36
- N. Golf course features  
93 52 130 182 143 195 9
- O. Donkey in *Winnie-the-Pooh*  
25 184 74 60 86 39
- P. Queen Mab "is the \_\_\_\_ midwife" (*Romeo and Juliet*)  
59 41 67 11 152 2 88
- Q. Heating device  
62 174 18 90 116 139 188 23
- R. Propitious  
30 85 186 166 189 132 22 109  
146
- S. Loony bin  
128 119 105 122 91 61 148 12
- T. "\_\_\_\_ me—he's got the goods" (3 wds.; O. Henry, "The Unprofitable Servant")  
64 127 183 192 80 104 164 95  
144 84
- U. Detrimental  
3 73 68 101 94 168 133 56  
108 136 160
- V. Entreats  
54 114 13 171 31 82 89
- W. Small, slender, long-armed arboreal apes of E. Indies and southern Asia  
126 149 35 19 4 3 15
- X. Strove  
76 98 110 123 139 7 1 8



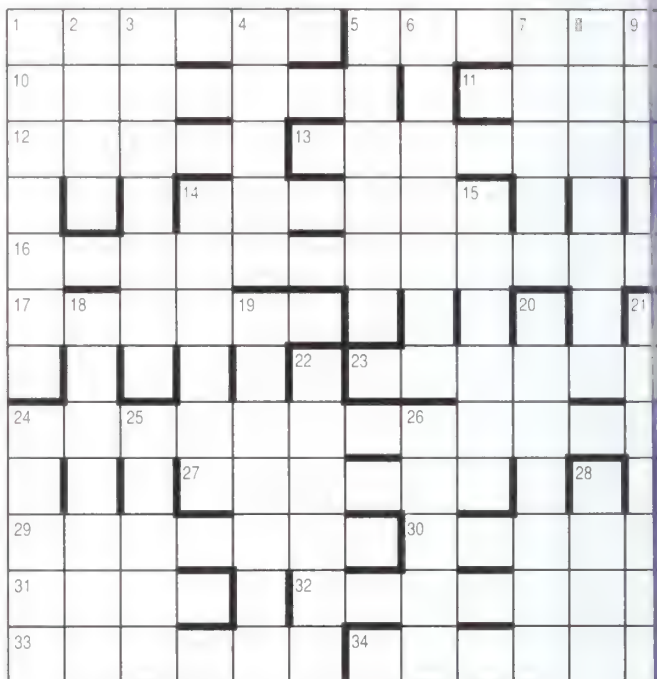
# PUZZLE

## Sixes and Sevens V

By Richard E. Maltby Jr.

with acknowledgments to *Land of The Listener*

**T**he clues to words of six and seven letters are grouped separately. Solvers must determine where each answer belongs in the diagram, using answers to the numbered clues as guides. 24 Down is an uncommon word. Answers include two proper nouns. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 72.



### ACROSS

11. Go after draggle-tail denizen of St. Mark's Place! (4)
12. Nonessential aspect of sex transformation (5)
16. Imps say bad things about onions (12)
24. Dancing girls copy tot, but his life is a cipher (12)
30. Current goes dead at *Rent* (5)
31. Sole mousse for summer babies (4)

### DOWN

2. Something called it back, circling chopper (4)
4. No end to a country's money (5)
7. "Right on!"—party music (5)
9. They're a cinch to be hits! (5)
24. Crab's claw produces stomachache, lasting just a bit (5)
25. Shout of joy from a brute? (5)
26. Senior "Replace Dole" Republican (5)
28. Do for a transformation (4)

### SIX-LETTER WORDS

- a. Turn up U.S.S.R. requisitions
- b. Down, down on the French burden
- c. Does something uplifting dressed in Lastex?
- d. Goes for a deer, holding revolver butt
- e. Builds theater income with passes

- f. Saab sedan replacing a Beetle
- g. God-child or king, taken aback
- h. Head of Syrian PLO is shaking booty
- i. Like things close?
- j. Go Shakespearean, with no longer looney tune
- k. International group races in Opens
- l. Steer food toward the West—girl is English


### SEVEN-LETTER WORDS

- a. Cross bull with wild deer—as a side effect got replications
- b. Left things to look back over RBIs, for example
- c. Eerie face in bad dreams leaves you wiped
- d. Not for showing over street
- e. Sty?
- f. "What a looker!" (Something repeated softly)
- g. What celebrity never hears at a posh restaurant?
- h. Complicated project
- i. Show your former spouse ("Hello!") part of a drill
- j. Live dangerously, anted up
- k. So-called Lion-man released
- l. Compressing sounds around Long Island Sound, re-turning

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Sixes and Sevens V," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by February 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the April issue. Winners of the December 1996 puzzle, "Triplets II," are Shirley Elliott, Brewster, Massachusetts; Anita Winn, Lebanon, Pennsylvania; and Barb Tomlinson, Seattle, Washington.



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# HARPER'S

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FOUNDED IN 1850 / VOL. 294, NO. 1762

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# LETTERS

## The Politics of Meanness

As a longtime reader of both *Harper's Magazine* and *Tikkun*, I was fascinated to read Peter Marin's essay ["An American Yearning," December 1996] on *Tikkun* editor and publisher Michael Lerner and his National Summit on Ethics and Meaning in Washington. The essay was smart and biting, unsparing in its observations of some of the excesses and eccentricities of Lerner and the Summit, but it seemed to be grounded in cynicism and smug self-satisfaction. It seemed to expect the reader to say, "Thank God I'm smart enough not to do *this*; thank God I'm not foolish enough to believe *that*." Marin is right to criticize belief that is foolishly or thoughtlessly placed, but his own position allows for no belief at all, and for no possibility of action.

*Tikkun* is attempting to create a framework that can become a basis for positive action, and yes, this framework necessarily incorporates such tainted notions as "spirituality," "meaning," and "hope." Marin is willing at least to concede that "people need hope," but he derides as "foolish and delusionary" those avenues of hope that people manage to find. He goes on to say that "those who cannot find joy or satisfaction in the present, in the world as it is, are not likely to find them elsewhere anytime soon." By contrast, Lerner and *Tikkun* are attempting to foster a politics, drawing on Jewish tradition, that refuses to see satisfaction in the present, that attempts to respond to the hollowness and darkness that confront us—the

hollowness and darkness perceptible, for example, in Charles Bowden's "While You Were Sleeping" in the very same issue of *Harper's*.

Marin sees in the Politics of Meaning a fear of freedom. He is correct perhaps, in detecting a proscriptive tendency, a tendency to round off the messy edges of things. But there is also a deep respect for freedom, belief that, given adequate resources, people will find ways to use the freedom less cruelly. *Tikkun* derives its name from the biblical injunction concerning *tikkun olam*—to mend, heal, transform the world. This may seem a tall order, but what, exactly, are the other options? "Last days, or friend, last days," Marin quips. Last days or not, these days call for more than just wry commentary.

Alan Shefsky  
Chicago

Peter Marin notes the booming heavy demographics of the Summit on Ethics and Meaning, but he doesn't make enough of how Michael Lerner's staggering moral self-regard has been fed by the hubris of a generation that still feels it has been chosen to redeem the world, should know. I was *Tikkun*'s assistant editor from 1990 to 1992, and during my tenure there, Lerner routinely invoked the ends-justifies-the-means reasoning perfected by the new leadership to steer the magazine toward the personality-driven politics that it now specializes in almost exclusively.

Not long after arriving at the magazine, for example, I learned that Lerner was in the habit of composing pseudonymous letters to the editor that held great praise for his own insight and vision. When confronted Lerner and threatened

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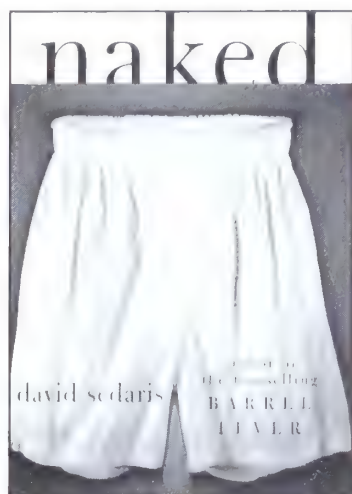
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put if the practice continued, he maintained that he was merely engaged in "creative writing" that helped to extend the various dialogues that enlivened "the *Tikkun* community." Although he agreed at the time to stop writing the letters, he resumed upon my departure.

Lerner also engaged in the time-honored leftist tradition of hanging workers out to dry. When the magazine's associate publisher quit in 1992, Lerner and *Tikkun*'s governing board moved to eliminate the position and to distribute its duties among the magazine's four editorial and production employees. No additional compensation was to accompany the new duties.

When we protested, Lerner and the board responded with a plan to institute 30 percent across-the-board workforce or salary cuts; we resigned and were replaced by unpaid interns. As I prepared to leave, Lerner reproached me for my "moral accountability" in the labor conflict. Shortly afterward, of course, Lerner and *Tikkun*, thanks to the spiritual unrest of our First Lady, moved on to minor political and theological celebrity.

Thus does the fast and loose talk of "pain" and "healing" and "meaning" one hears issuing from these self-important Lerner-sponsored conferences have a distinctly disingenuous ring for me. So, for that matter, does the name of *Tikkun*'s nonprofit governing board: The Institute for Labor and Mental Health.

Chris Lehmann  
Northport, N.Y.

## Wrongspeak

In the October 1996 Readings, *Harper's Magazine* printed an excerpt of a letter written by George Orwell to Celia Kirwan of the British Secret Service ["Lending Big Brother a Hand"] in which he mentions my great grandfather, the Russian translator and critic Gleb Struve. The title and introduction to the letter, provided by *Harper's*, imply that Orwell is naming possible Communist collaborators and thus that Orwell believes Gleb Struve to be such. This is utter nonsense.

It is clear from the complete letter (sent to me by Struve's widow) that

Orwell was providing names of people he thought could be trusted to produce anti-Communist literature. It is worth noting that Struve translated Orwell's *Animal Farm* into Russian.

I am also enclosing a copy of a letter sent to me by Richard Pipes, biographer of Struve's father, Peter Struve, in response to your article.

Mr. Wheeler

Thank you for the clipping. It is quite clear from the context that Orwell was asked for writers capable of writing anti-Communist propaganda and that it mentions Gleb Struve as a possibility. The *New Leader and Commentator* were staunchly anti-Communist, and (by this time) was [the writer Franz Borkenau. Orwell then goes on to say that he can also supply names of crypto-Communists, etc., who cannot be trusted. It is clear that in Orwell's view Gleb was someone who could be trusted. It is an outrage that *Harper's Magazine* would misconstrue Orwell's letter and, in the process, malign Gleb Struve. You owe it to his memory to write a letter and set things straight.

—Richard Pipes

I hope you will see fit to correct and clarify your published misinformation.

Kevin Wheeler  
San Francisco

## Editors' note:

Clearly George Orwell believed neither Gleb Struve nor Franz Borkenau to be a potential Communist collaborator. We sincerely regret the implication and any confusion it may have caused.

## Border Dispute

The December issue—and specifically Charles Bowden's report ["While You Were Sleeping"] on the street photographers of Ciudad Juárez and the almost constant horror they depict—brought us to a new level of diagnosis without cure. Bowden carefully uses "we" and "us" when describing the indifference of North Americans to that suffering, and seems to think this state of affairs must come as a great surprise. I can be the only North American who could have predicted the current situation in Juárez from Bill Clinton's description of NAFTA. Bowden's article is very good, but I don't need



ne photos and the statistics—I need  
ome practical advice on how to fight  
ch injustice now and in the future.  
I was also disturbed by the feeling  
at Bowden and some of the pho-  
graphers he writes about may actu-  
lly enjoy the violence and excite-  
ent they chronicle. It is much  
asier (and more exciting) to run  
round and describe a situation than  
o sit still and think of solutions.  
he photographers in Juárez are per-  
aps less suspect in this regard, be-  
ause they are, after all, bearing wit-  
ness to their beliefs by continuing to  
ake photos. But Bowden is one step  
removed from that life, and that one  
ep puts him far enough away to de-  
scribe the problem *and* look for ways  
o solve it.

As long as *Harper's* continues to  
ocument problems without suggest-  
ing actions to combat them, I will  
ave to conclude that its articles are  
erely intended to induce mutual  
issions of pleasurable guilt in the au-  
thors and the readers.

eresa A. Ellis  
acramento, Calif.

Charles Bowden has impressed  
himself tremendously with his dis-  
covery of the *real* Juárez, and his self-  
ongratulation stinks as bad as the  
ecomposing murder victims he so  
ovingly describes. I can't wait until  
e gives us the scoop on Tijuana and  
Matamoros.

"There are moments when I love  
Mexico," he says about his ability to  
ribe a policeman with a cigarette so  
that the cop will let his photographer  
riend snap another picture of a  
orps. Eventually he finds he's "gone  
ative. Reality comes and goes for  
e." That old magical realism again!

"You give us hope," Bowden's pho-  
tographer friends tell him. Even so,  
hey're sure he'll never get the grisly  
icture of a murdered "girl" published.  
ut they underestimate their white  
ope: the photo triumphantly appears  
n the first pages of the article.

The sad truth is that Bowden's  
dolescent fascination with the sensa-  
tional and spectacular aspects of  
rime in Juárez and his self-conscious-  
7 heroic involvement in bringing it

*Continued on page 77*

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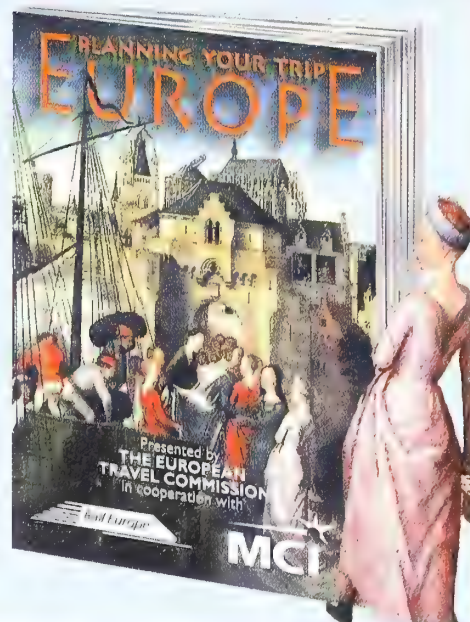
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# NOTEBOOK

## Alms for oblivion By Lewis H. Lapham

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,  
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,  
A great-sized monster of ingratitudes:  
Those scraps are good deeds past; which  
Are devour'd  
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon  
As done: perseverance, dear my lord,  
Keeps honour bright . . .

—William Shakespeare

When I agreed late last summer to go to New Orleans in early January for the celebration of what would have been the late Bernard DeVoto's nine hundredth birthday, I made the mistake of thinking that I could meet the rhetorical demands of the occasion with a few words of well-turned praise. What I knew of DeVoto, I knew from reading his more famous books—1846: *The Year of Decision*, *Across the Wide Missouri*, *The Course of Empire*, *Mark Twain's America*. I knew him as a first-rate historian, passionate in his feeling for the nineteenth-century American West, and as a fine writer whose accounts of the long line of ox-drawn wagons lumbering across the plains from the Missouri River to Fort Laramie and South Pass had shaped much of my own imagining of the Oregon Trail.

But the program called for me to speak about DeVoto in his character as a journalist, specifically as the author of the monthly column appearing in *Harper's Magazine* between 1935 and 1955 under the rubric "The Easy Chair," and these writings I knew only by hearsay. From time to time at a New York literary assembly I would run across a senior member of the city's publishing faculty, who would say that I took the trouble to read DeVoto in

"The Easy Chair" I might learn something useful about American politics and the English language. But although I invariably assured the gentleman in question that I would turn to the lesson at once, invariably I postponed doing so, probably because I didn't want to be reminded of my own shortcomings as DeVoto's successor.

The present "Notebook" is the continuation of "The Easy Chair," which is the oldest column in American journalism. First published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1851, it has been written in the years since by only seven men, among them William Dean Howells, who wrote the column between 1900 and 1920, at the zenith of his reputation as the acknowledged dean of American letters. A successful novelist (*A Hazard of New Fortunes*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, etc.) and a former editor of *The Atlantic*, Howells was a man so famous in his day that his portrait was to be seen on cigar-box labels.

DeVoto took up the column in 1935, well aware of its historical precedents and in the midst of one of his long-standing arguments with the New York book crowd about the life and art of Mark Twain. Eastern tea-table opinion at the time held that Twain had been ruined by his travels west of the Mississippi (a good mind gone to rot in the brothels of San Francisco and the deserts of Nevada), and DeVoto delighted in wrecking the dainty misperceptions cherished by critics who never had been west of the Algonquin Hotel.

Born in Ogden, Utah, under the western slope of the Wasatch Mountains, the son of a Mormon father and a Catholic mother (both apostate), DeVoto attended public high school

and Harvard University before settling, in 1927, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His presence in the East strengthened his fierce affection for the West, and his writing is everywhere marked by poignant remembrance of western landscapes, western grasses, western animals and birds.

The composition of "The Easy Chair," a column always grotesquely misnamed, he looked upon as the first of what he called his "private assignments," and as I read through back issues of *Harper's Magazine* prior to going to New Orleans, I encountered a writer whom I came increasingly to admire, and one whose like no longer appears in the arenas of American journalism. Free of ideological cant and capable of keeping straight the different tenses and declensions of time, DeVoto addressed his remarks to a literate society that constructed its thought with words instead of images.

He died suddenly of a ruptured heart in 1955, a year when I was still in college, but from his photographs and from people who knew him well, I gathered that he was somewhat similar in appearance to H. L. Mencken, a heavy smoker (cigarettes, not cigars) who didn't mince his words and wore his convictions on his sleeve. By nature contrarian, he undertook the writing of "The Easy Chair" in the spirit of dissent and as a matter of civic obligation. The American democracy he understood as an idea in motion and a set of principles constantly in need of further experiment and revision. Against the impulse to declare the experiment complete (an impulse easily confused by the wellborn and comfortably placed with the will of Divine Providence), DeVoto construed "The



Larry Chin" as relentless in the detaching of whatever temporary wisdom chanced to have been elected to political or literary office.

What was remarkable was not only DeVoto's broad range of topics—the fascist components of McCarthyism, the improper manufacture of kitchen knives and the proper manufacture of a martini, the feckless destruction of the public land and the national forest (by rapacious timber and mining interests that enjoyed, then as now, the blessings of a compliant Congress), the Mexican and Civil wars, detective novels, Marxism, the Union Pacific Railroad, sagebrush, and the FBI—but also his many tones of voice—sardonic, whimsical, poetic, angry, puckish, romantic, mocking, philosophical.

Often at odds with his peers in the literary trades, he detested flag-waving patriots, thought Harry Truman too conservative in his politics and Thomas Wolfe too liberal with his adjectives, never tired of emptying the slops of ridicule on the heads of imbecile novelists and crooked politicians. Many of his columns read as if they had been written last week, and following their progress through the pages of *Harper's Magazine*, I marked enough passages to teach a semester's course in what DeVoto would have called "the technic" of declamatory prose.

**ON GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE:** Announcing in 1949 (i.e., long before it was safe to do so) that henceforth he would refuse to cooperate with government investigations loosed upon the citizenry by the House Un-American Activities Committee or the FBI—"I like a country where it's nobody's damned business what magazines anyone reads, what he thinks, whom he has cocktails with. I like a country where we do not have to stuff the chimney against listening ears. . . . We had that kind of country a little while ago, and I'm for getting it back. It was a lot less scared than the one we've got now."

**ON BAD WRITING:** With specific reference to Miss Gertrude Stein, "whose art had no connection whatever with life or death, love or hate, rejoicing or grief, success or failure, belief or doubt, any other emotion of mankind, any experience of anyone, or any of the

values that enable people to live together—an art which floated freely in a medium of pure caprice sustained by nothing except its awareness of its own inner wondrousness."

**ON DEMOCRACY:** Relieving Walter Lippmann in 1939 of the delicate impression that democratic government is a stately exchange of high-minded, non-partisan views among the senior members of the Century Club, that it somehow can be washed clean of envy, jealousy, or greed, that it is ever anything other than the work of ordinary men, bewildered, groping, at cross purposes, verbose—"The Senate had not forgotten, as Mr. Lippmann had, that this is a democracy. The Senators are politicians, much less clever than you or I, much more steeped in partisanship than Mr. Lippmann. They are certain to be fog its issues with deplorable ignorance, certain to distort them with partisan interests of political parties, personal candidacies, business interests and pressure groups. . . . Thank God!"

**ON RADICAL CHIC:** Speaking in 1940 of a doe-eyed leftist intellectual who had supported the "brave and wholly literary rebellion" of Marxism with the enthusiasm of an inherited fortune and abruptly finds himself betrayed by Stalin's pact with Hitler—"You can say something, if uselessly, to a friend whose child has died, whose wife has left him, whose ambition has been wrecked. But what can you say to a friend whose god has died?"

No matter what the topic at hand, DeVoto's strength as a writer springs from his understanding that history is a continuous narrative, as closely bound to time future as to time past. His Mormon grandfather climbed the grade of the Platte River in company with Brigham Young, and, once arrived in the Utah Valley under the auspices of the angel Moroni, he resurrected the dead land with apple orchards, and where he found the earth poisoned with volcanic ash he made it sweet with cottonwood trees.

Two of DeVoto's most somber columns draw the lines of historical perspective on the blackboard of the Second World War. The German

armies invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, but the printing schedule of *Harper's Magazine* delayed DeVoto's response until the November issue and a column entitled "The Oncoming." He begins with his listening to the news of the invasion on a car radio in the hills of northern Vermont. The far-off voices, urgent and broken but static, remind him of a bright afternoon in August 1914, in the Rock Mountains. The German armies have marched into Belgium, and DeVoto is seventeen years old, at work in a newspaper office, copying the bulletins from the Associated Press wire onto long strips of cheap paper and hanging them in the windows from lengths of twine. The pictures in his head are those of a storybook war—Uhlans sitting astride their horses against the Belgian sky at twilight, British destroyers putting hurriedly to sea, columns of dust-gray troops marching through fields of ripening wheat—all pretty pictures, as romantic as Sir Lancelot and as far away as Saturn. The nostalgic sentiment doesn't last as long as the next sentence. Correcting it at once with the counterweight of history (the sum of the dead at Château-Thierry and Verdun, what happened to President Wilson's useless Fourteen Points) and knowing that "this time the war will be neither distant nor romantic, even to boys," DeVoto wonders what will become of America and what he will say to his nine-year-old son. He measures the likely cost of the war in the loss of individual liberty, even among the victors, and by the probable transformation of "a nation that never quite existed" into something a good deal closer in character and tone to an authoritarian bureaucracy.

The questions lead DeVoto first to the thought that his son will not grow up in the America in which he was born, and then, bearing in mind his grandfather's trees, to the further thought, "but neither did I, or anyone else who has ever lived here." America is about making the best of what can be made of circumstances usually adverse, and the cost of any life is the price asked for it, which, as often as not, comes down to a "belief in a right and truth that do not exist, conscription in a war against the uncompromised for reasons never given."



A similarly hard-edged realism informs a column that DeVoto introduces five years later with the sentences, "You may remember the Lost Generation. It was primarily a literary phenomenon, an invention of novelists." By April 1944 the end of the Second World War was plainly in sight, and DeVoto sets out to forestall a reprise of the self-pity that became fashionable in the 1920s. The trope of the Lost Generation he attributes to Ernest Hemingway and finds "sickly and unclean," a cliché much in vogue among college boys drinking iced gin under potted palms, nodding their glossy heads and tapping their glossy shoes in time to a Cole Porter tune, saying that their finer feelings had been so bruised by the ugliness of war that "they saw quite through life's hollow shams." DeVoto very much hopes that this time there will be none of that. Yes, the conditions of life are not what any of us would choose—"It is too bad that we grow old, too bad that we prove less admirable than we thought, too bad that love fails, ambition peters out, friends die, dreams come to nothing"—but the waste and failure of an individual does not mean that "God had it in for him" or that "a private pain in the bowels" proves the theorem of the world's evil.

Again it is DeVoto's sense of history (of the generations belonging to the same repertory company, succeeding one another on the same stage) that enlarges his argument. He is not talking merely about literary affectation. Simultaneously and in the same wide lens with the languid tableau of the Lost Generation posed in tuxedos and evening gowns against a Manhattan skyline, DeVoto sees the wounded armies of the Potomac and Northern Virginia, walking home from the Civil War without shoes, wearing ragged and stinking clothes, carrying with them the memories of panic, hunger, lice, dysentery, and their friends blown to bloody shreds, and, whether they were going South or North, "the best years of their youth devoured by war, no fine thing done, no fine thing possible in the time remaining."

And what became of that generation, and who among them sang the sad songs of self-pity? Instead of admiring the symbolic impotence of Jake Barnes, they went out and sold the

crops, repaired the farm, "broke the prairies, dug the mines, occupied the West, built the railroads, manned the industry that remade the world."

The celebration of DeVoto's centennial birthday took place on January 11, at Le Petite Théâtre in the New Orleans French Quarter, across St. Peter Street from the old Spanish building in which, on December 20, 1803, the envoys of Napoleon transferred to the agents of Thomas Jefferson the deed to the Louisiana Purchase. An audience of maybe two hundred people, almost all of them over the age of fifty, listened to a series of appreciative remarks by DeVoto's son, Mark, by Stephen Ambrose, Patricia Limerick, and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. The program occupied the whole of the day, and as I listened to the several scholars talk about different aspects of DeVoto's work (his editing of the Lewis and Clark journals, his efforts on behalf of the public lands), it was easy enough to think of the objections that could be raised against his telling of the American tale—overly triumphant, too many white men in the foreground and not enough women in the scene, too idealistic a faith in Manifest Destiny.

Some of the objections no doubt could be sustained, but what struck me even more forcibly were the differences between DeVoto's language—rooted in fact and grounded in narrative—and our own postliterate drift of images set to the music of television. Narrative becomes a picturesque montage (like a commercial for Calvin Klein's *Obsession* or movies as flaccid as *The English Patient*), and the distinctions between time present and time past dissolve into the mirrors of the eternal present. The effects are sometimes marvelous to behold, but how do we write history in a language like Gertrude Stein's, one that floats freely "in a medium of pure caprice sustained by nothing except its awareness of its own inner wondrousness," and if we don't know how to tell ourselves our own story, then how do we know who we are? DeVoto would have thought the questions worth the trouble of an answer, and next month in this space I'll attempt, if not an answer, at least a preliminary hearing. ■

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# HARPER'S INDEX

- Federal funds spent since last October to gild Newt Gingrich's office ceiling, gold excluded : \$40,400
- Speaking fees earned last year by *Book of Virtues* author William Bennett : \$1,800,000
- Number of questions Justice Clarence Thomas asked last January during oral arguments of the Paula Jones case : 0
- Amount the Library of Congress spent last year to create a braille edition of *Playboy* : \$60,000
- Number of sex offenders' addresses registered with New Jersey police since the passage of Megan's law : 3,532
- Amount Albuquerque began charging criminals last October for each night spent in jail : \$40
- Number of ex-inmates of South Africa's Robben Island Prison who now serve as tour guides there : 4
- Number of ex-guards who do : 2
- Chance that an inmate in a Peruvian prison is being held for terrorism : 1 in 5
- Number of wars ever fought between countries that both had at least one McDonald's franchise : 0
- Percentage of the number of tanks the Republic of Yugoslavia promised to destroy last year that have been destroyed : 300
- Portion of the \$2 million in arms-demolition aid the country was promised by the U.S. last year that has been delivered : 0
- Percentage of the Pentagon's daily Gulf War records of soldiers' chemical exposure that are missing : 76
- Number of EPA studies ever conducted on how commercially used toxic chemicals react in combination : 0
- Amount oil companies owe the U.S. for undervaluing the oil pumped from public land since 1978 : \$2,050,000,000
- Percentage of the cigarettes sold overseas by U.S. companies last year that were manufactured overseas : 66
- Value of the business U.S. firms claim to lose each year because they cannot legally bribe foreign officials : \$11,000,000,000
- Number of foreign lobbyists convicted since 1963 of failing to comply with U.S. financial-disclosure laws : 0
- Value of the corporate tax breaks attached to last summer's minimum-wage bill : \$21,400,000,000
- Years of minimum-wage work required to earn what Disney gave Mike Ovitz last year as a separation package : 6,708
- Average number of *101 Dalmatians* products introduced each day since the film's release last winter : 380
- Ratio of the maximum number of seats in the new Oldsmobile Silhouette minivan to the number of drink holders : 1:2
- Percentage of Americans who say that they have "pretty much or most everything" they need : 79
- Percentage change since 1990 in the number of Americans filing for personal bankruptcy : +22
- Price for which a Kissimmee, Florida, woman allegedly offered to sell her five-year-old niece to a stranger last December : \$24
- Price of a diamond-encrusted Miracle Bra introduced by Victoria's Secret last fall : \$1,000,000
- Number sold so far : 0
- Attendance at the first annual Christian Nudist Convention, held last year in Shallotte, North Carolina : 65
- Ratio of attendance at U.S. bingo games last year to attendance at professional basketball games : 59:1
- Number of recruitment letters a USC basketball coach sent Avarde Jones before he was signed : 900
- Chance that an American family can afford to pay full tuition at a private four-year college : 1 in 13
- Percentage change since 1990 in the total number of students taking the LSAT : -25
- Percentage change since then in the number of students taking LSATs adjusted for Attention Deficit Disorder : +1,510
- Ratio of federal research funds spent last year on AIDS to those spent on Alzheimer's, per patient : 20:1
- Average age of a member of one of the ten top-grossing rock-concert bands in the United States : 41
- Percentage of British women who find Prime Minister John Major "attractive" : 2
- Percentage who find Labour Leader Tony Blair "smarmy" : 24
- Chance that a magazine sold at a U.S. Army, Navy, or Air Force base is an adult magazine : 1 in 5
- Chance that a human being will view *Baywatch* in the next week : 1 in 6

Figures cited have been adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of January 1997. Sources are listed on page 78.  
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# READINGS

[Essay]

## THE ELUSIVE GOAL OF WAR TRIALS

*From "Articles of Faith," by Michael Ignatieff, in the September/October 1996 issue of Index on Censorship. Ignatieff is the author, most recently, of Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism. His essay "A Cosmopolitan Among the True Believers" appeared in the March 1994 issue of Harper's Magazine.*

**W**hat does it mean for a nation to come to terms with its past? Can a nation be reconciled to its past as an individual can, by replacing myth with fact and lies with truth? Can we speak of nations "working through" a civil war or an atrocity as we speak of individuals working through a traumatic memory or event?

These are mysterious questions, but they are also urgent and practical ones. In The Hague, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia is currently collecting evidence about atrocities in that region. It is doing so not simply because such crimes against humanity must be punished but also because we've come to believe that establishing a shared truth about such crimes is crucial to the eventual reconciliation of the people of the Balkans. In the African city of Arusha, a similar tribunal is collecting evidence about the genocide in Rwan-

da, believing likewise that truth, justice, and reconciliation are indissolubly linked in the rebuilding of shattered societies.

The great virtue of legal proceedings is that their evidentiary rules confer legitimacy on otherwise contestable facts. In this sense, war-crimes trials make it more difficult for societies to take refuge in denial—the trials do assist the process of uncovering the truth. It is more doubtful, though, whether they assist the process of reconciliation. The truth that matters to people is not factual truth but moral truth; not a narrative that tells *what* happened but a narrative that explains *why* it happened and who is responsible.

The idea that reconciliation depends on shared truth presumes that shared truth about the past is possible. But truth is related to identity. What you believe to be true depends, in some measure, on who you believe yourself to be. And who you believe yourself to be is mostly defined in terms of who you are not. To be a Serb is first and foremost not to be a Croat or a Muslim. If a Serb is someone who believes that Croats have a historical tendency toward fascism and a Croat is someone who believes that Serbs have a penchant for genocide, then to discard these myths is to give up a defining element of Serbian or Croatian identity.

Hill-country Serbs in the Foca region of Bosnia told journalists that their ethnic militias were obliged to cleanse the area of Muslims because it was a well-known fact that Muslims crucified Serbian children and floated their



[Plan of Attack]

## A TOUGH NEW ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

*From an internal memo sent last December to aides of Republican Governor George Allen of Virginia by Michael McKenna, the director of policy and planning for the state's Department of Environmental Quality. Earlier that month, a bipartisan panel, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), issued a report citing lapses in Allen's enforcement of state environmental laws, including his failure to collect fines from industrial polluters.*

**I** think we need to have a strategy to get us out from under the JLARC report. Let me propose the following:

- Starting next Friday, and every three or four days thereafter, we should issue a press release questioning a new aspect of the report. My preference would be to arrange them in the following order:

"Department of Environmental Quality claims JLARC distorted fines"

"Department of Environmental Quality asserts pattern of inaccuracy in JLARC report"

"JLARC report flawed; fails to note accomplishments"

- Shortly, like in the next week, get the governor to sign a letter [defending his environmental record], which we can send to *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and other papers.

- Immediately engage in some play-action to freeze the linebackers. Three possibilities:

Have one of us write a letter to JP [John P. Woodley, state deputy attorney general] asking whether we have a cause of action for libel against JLARC. Leak it to the press.

Get someone in Congress to send a letter to the EPA asking them to provide both documentation backing up JLARC's analysis and EPA's own assessment of the validity of JLARC's analysis using EPA numbers. Leak this to the press and have a congressional oversight guy talk (off the record) about a potential oversight hearing.

File a Freedom of Information Act petition with JLARC for any correspondence the panel had with the press. File under our names so they know we're the ones coming after them.

bodies down the river past Serbian settlements. Since such myths do not need factual corroboration in order to reproduce themselves, they are not likely to be dispelled by the patient assembly of evidence to the contrary. Myth is strangely impervious to facts.

Another problem with shared truth is that it does not lie "in between." It is not a compromise between two competing versions of events. Either the siege of Sarajevo was a deliberate attempt to terrorize and subvert the elected government of an internationally recognized state or it was a legitimate preemptive defense of the Serbs' homeland from Muslim attack. It cannot be both.

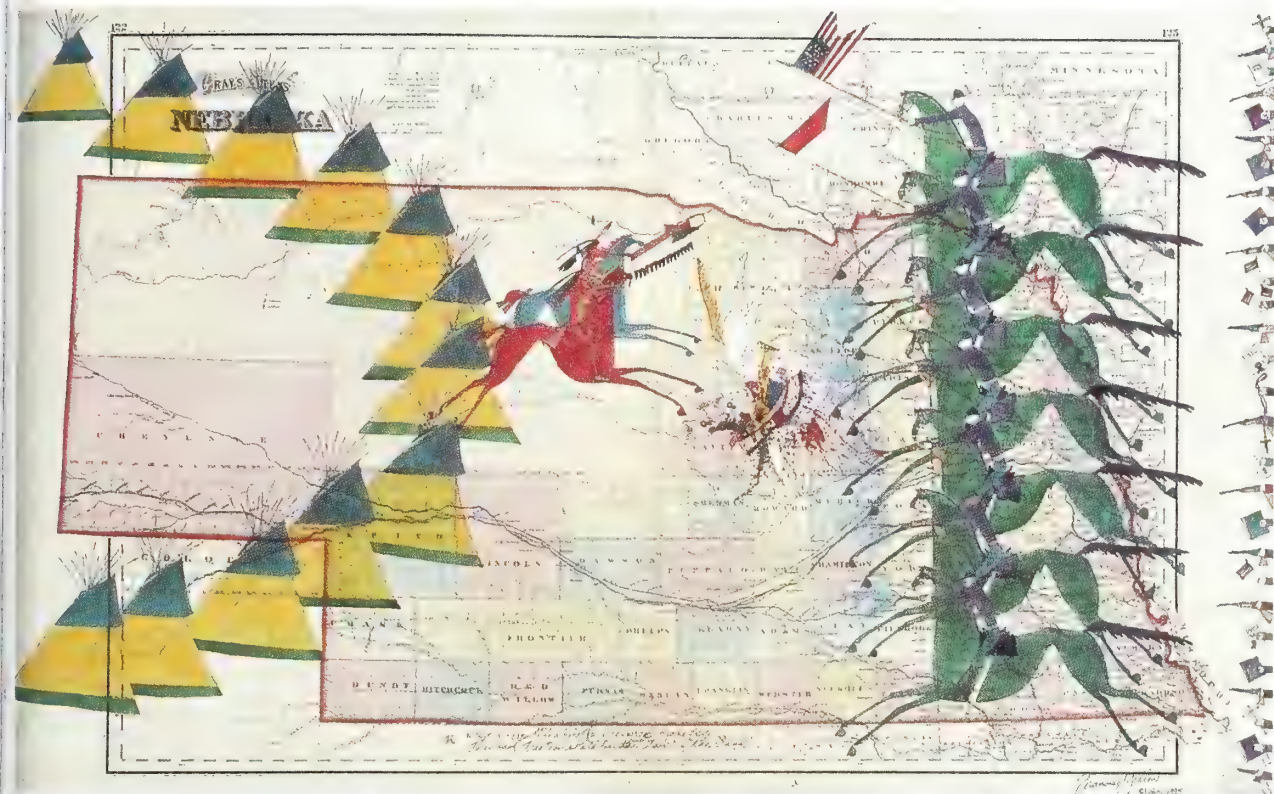
It is also an illusion to suppose that "impartial" or "objective" outsiders could ever succeed in getting their moral and interpretive account of the catastrophe accepted by the parties to the conflict. The very fact of being an outsider discredits rather than reinforces one's legitimacy. For there is always a truth that can be known only by those on the inside. Or if not a truth—since facts are facts—then a moral significance for these facts that only an insider can fully appreciate. The truth, if it is to be believed, must be authored by those who have suffered its consequences.

The result of five years of war is that a shared truth is now inconceivable. In the conditions of ethnic separation and authoritarian populism prevailing in all of the republics of the former Yugoslavia, a shared truth—and hence a path from truth to reconciliation—is barred, not just by hatreds but by institutions too undemocratic to allow countervailing truths to circulate. It is not undermining the war-crimes tribunal process to maintain that the message of its truth is unlikely to penetrate the bell jars of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia. The point is merely that one must keep justice separate from reconciliation. Justice is justice, and within the strict limits of what is possible, it should be done. Justice will also serve the interests of truth. But the truth will not necessarily be believed, and it is putting too much faith in truth to believe that it can heal. All one can say is that leaving war crimes unpunished is worse: it

permits societies to indulge, unopposed, their fantasies of denial.

**W**hat seems apparent in the former Yugoslavia is that the past continues to torment because it is not past. These places are not living in a serial order of time but in a simultaneous one, in which the past and present are a continuous, agglutinated mass of fantasies, distortions, myths, and lies. Reporters in the Balkan wars often observed that when they were told atrocity stories they were occasional-





Wicoun Pinkte Maka Kin Ta Wicokunze Oyake Pelo ("They Said Treaties Shall Be the Law of the Land"), a painting on a nineteenth-century map by Francis Yellow, a Lakota artist. The painting appeared in *Plains Indian Drawings 1865–1935: Pages from a Visual History*, published by Harry N. Abrams. A touring exhibit is also currently on display at the Milwaukee Art Museum. Yellow lives in Minneapolis.

ly uncertain whether these stories had occurred yesterday or in 1941, or 1841, or 1441. For the tellers of the tale, yesterday and today were the same. When James Joyce had Stephen Daedalus say, in the opening pages of *Ulysses*, that the past was a nightmare from which he was struggling to awake, this is what he meant; as in nightmare, time past and time present were indistinguishable for the Irish people. This, it should be added, is the dreamtime of vengeance. Crimes can never safely be fixed in the historical past; they remain locked in the eternal present, crying out for vengeance.

This makes the process of coming to terms with the past, and of being reconciled to its pain, much more complicated than simply sifting fact from fiction, lies from truth. It means working it through the inner recesses of the psychic system so that a serial sense of time eventually replaces the nightmare of pure simultaneity.

Nations, properly speaking, cannot be reconciled to other nations, only individuals to individuals. Nonetheless, individuals can be helped to heal and to reconcile by public rituals of atonement. When Chilean President

Patricio Alwyn appeared on television to apologize to the victims of Pinochet's repression, he created the public climate in which a thousand acts of private repentance and apology became possible. He also symbolically cleansed the Chilean state of its association with these crimes. West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's gesture of going down on his knees in the Warsaw ghetto had a similarly cathartic effect by officially associating the German state with the process of atonement. These acts compare strikingly with the behavior of the political figures responsible for the war in the Balkans. If, instead of writing books disputing the numbers of people exterminated at Jasenovac during World War II, President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia had gone to the site of the most notorious of the Croatian extermination camps and publicly apologized for the crimes committed by the Croatian Ustashe against Serbs, Gypsies, partisan resisters, and Jews, he would have liberated the Croatian present from the hold of the Ustashe past. He also would have increased dramatically the chances of the Serbian minority accepting the legitimacy of an independent Croatian state. Had



He linked the trials of the past, the war of 1991 might not have occurred. He chose not to, of course, because he believed the Serbs to be just as guilty of crimes against the Croats. But sometimes a gesture of atonement is effective precisely because it rises above the crimes done to your own side. Societies and nations are not like individuals, but the individuals who have political authority within societies can have an enormous impact on the mysterious process by which individuals come to terms with the pain of their society's past.

The experience of the war in Yugoslavia makes it difficult to conceive of reconciliation, if it were ever possible, in terms of "forgiving and forgetting," "turning the page," "putting the past behind us," and so on. The intractable ferocity and scale of the war show up the hollowness of these clichés for what they are. But reconciliation might eventually be founded on something starker: the democracy of the dead, the equality of all victims, the drastic nullity of all struggles that end in killing, and the demonstrable futility of avenging the past in the present.

[Search Results]

## THE GOOD NEWS

*From a list of headlines compiled last October by Michael Perry, using Excite, an Internet navigation service, to find news stories that were archived on Yahoo! an online guide to the Web. The headlines appeared as follows.*

Yahoo! Tensions Mount in Northern Iraq  
 Yahoo! Spiro Agnew Dies of Leukemia  
 Yahoo! Republicans Split Over Abortion  
 Yahoo! AIDS Fear Fuels Demand for Sex  
 Yahoo! Liberian Refugees Start to Leave  
 Yahoo! Man with Gun, Knife at Olympics  
 Yahoo! Israeli Jets Attack Guerrillas  
 Yahoo! Marijuana May Affect Embryo  
 Yahoo! Heroin Found on Colombian Chief  
 Yahoo! Rap Star Tupac Shakur Shot  
 Yahoo! Clinton Backs Molester Listing  
 Yahoo! Dick Morris Still Giving Advice  
 Yahoo! Dry Salami Can Carry Bacteria

[Omissions]

## THE BOMBS THE TIMES FORGOT

*From an annotation by Jim Naureckas, in the September/October 1996 issue of EXTRA! published by Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, in New York City. Naureckas noted events that were omitted in "A Trail of Rubble: Mideast and Bombings," a timeline that accompanied an article in the June 27, 1996, New York Times about the terrorist bombing of a U.S. military compound in Saudi Arabia. The Times's original chronology is in Roman type below; Naureckas's additions are italicized.*

Beirut, April 1983

Muslim fundamentalist suicide bomber wrecks U.S. Embassy, killing 63 people, including 16 Americans.

Lebanon, September 1983

The USS New Jersey shells nonmilitary targets, killing hundreds of civilians.

Beirut, October 1983

Shiite Muslim suicide bombers kill 241 U.S. servicemen and 58 French paratroopers in attacks on military bases of a multinational force.

Beirut, September 1984

Explosives-laden station wagon explodes in front of U.S. Embassy annex, killing 11 people.

Lebanon, March 1985

A car bombing aimed at a Lebanese faction leader fails to kill its target but kills more than 80 bystanders. According to Bob Woodward's *Veil*, the bombing was arranged by CIA Director William Casey and carried out by Saudi agents.

Paris, 1985-86

Bombings kill 13 people and injure 250. Group demanding release of Lebanese guerrillas takes responsibility.

Berlin, April 1986

Bomb at nightclub popular with off-duty U.S. soldiers kills 2 U.S. servicemen and injures 200. The United States blames Libya.

Libya, April 1986

Bombing by U.S. warplanes results in the death of 37 civilians, including Muammar Qaddafi's infant daughter.

Persian Gulf, July 1988

The USS Vincennes shoots down an Iranian passenger plane flying a scheduled route, killing all 290 people aboard, in what President Ronald Reagan called a "proper defensive action."

Lockerbie, Scotland, December 1988

Pan Am Flight 103 blows up over Lockerbie, killing 270 people. The U.S. and Britain later accuse two Libyans of responsibility.





*"The Priestess of Obaluwaye Shrine," from Kings, Chiefs, Women of Power, Nigeria, a series of portraits by Phyllis Galembo. The photographs will be on display next year at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Galembo lives in New York City.*

Niger, September 1989

DC-10 of the French airline UTA blows up over Sahara while on a flight to Paris, killing 171 people. France blames Libyan agents.

Iraq, January–February 1991

The U.S. drops 250,000 bombs during the Gulf War, resulting in thousands of civilian deaths.

Iraq, January 1993

The U.S. launches a cruise-missile attack against Iraq to punish the country for flying planes over its own territory. Civilian targets are hit, including Baghdad's al-Rashid Hotel.

New York, February 1993

Six people killed and more than 1,000 injured in bombing at the World Trade Center. Four followers of an Egyptian fundamentalist leader, Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman, are convicted. The sheik and 12 supporters are found guilty of plotting to blow up other U.S. targets and to assassinate political leaders.

Baghdad, June 1993

The U.S. launches a missile attack against the city in response to an alleged Iraqi assassination plot

against former President Bush. The evidence for such a plot turns out to be dubious. The attack kills at least 5 civilians, including Leila al-Attar, one of Iraq's best-known artists.

Lebanon, July 1993

Israel launches a major bombing campaign in what Israeli officials acknowledged was a "campaign to reduce dozens of villages and towns to heaps of rubble, creating an uninhabited area."

Cairo, 1993–94

Muslim militants begin a series of bomb attacks, many directed against Western tourists, in a campaign that has so far claimed 920 lives, including 26 tourists.

Paris, July–October 1995

Eight bombings in France, claimed by guerrillas of the Armed Islamic Group fighting to overthrow the Algiers government, kill 7 and injure 160.

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, November 1995

Five Americans and 2 Indians are killed and 60 injured in explosion at a car park near a U.S.-run military training center. In May 1996, four



Saudi Muslim fundamentalists are beheaded after being convicted in the attack.

*Envision*, April 1996

An Israeli artillery barrage on a U.N. compound kills more than 100 civilians.

Dharan, Saudi Arabia, June 25, 1996

Truck bomb kills 19 Americans and injures 400 people of various nationalities at a military barracks.

[Rejection]

## A SHERIFF FOR TOON TOWN

*From an internal memorandum sent last April to the writing staff of The Tick, a Saturday-morning cartoon on the Fox-TV Network, by Linda Shima-Tsuno, the policy editor of the network's Broadcast Standards and Practices Department. The staff had submitted to the department an outline of a script for a proposed episode entitled "The Tick vs. Continuing Education"; after receiving the memo, the writers abandoned the script.*

**T**his is to confirm that I have received and read the latest outline of the episode and have the following comments:

It will not be acceptable to have this story revolve around a Unabomber-type villain.

In the last outline, there was only one explosion. It happened at the end of the story, underwater, and caused no serious damage. Now the entire story is built around the explosion of bombs. Either the villain and his method of operation need to be changed entirely or the types of devices he uses need to be presented more in the realm of fantasy. Their effects can still be 1) releasing a deluge of suds in the grocery store, 2) melting the car, or 3) freezing the Tick and [his sidekick] Arthur, but they must not be referred to as "bombs," and the villain must not be referred to as an "Evil Bomber."

Page 1: It will not be acceptable for the Four-Legged Man to be the victim of a car-bombing explosion at the Burger Bucket.

Page 2: It will not be acceptable for the Four-Legged Man to be seriously injured with "two splinted legs . . . a neck brace and a head bandage." He may be prevented from teaching his class due to some *minor* injury, or for another reason, such as a common cold or flu or car trouble.

Page 4: It will not be acceptable for the villain to be "busy cutting wires, building bombs," or saying, "I am the Evil Bomber, What Bombs

at Midnight." He may, however, be portrayed as a mad scientist working on his inventions.

Page 8: Please change the contents of the "shopping cart full of bombs" to soap boxes or something that does not look like a bomb.

Page 9: The store can fill up with soap suds, but please show that the people in the store escape unharmed. They can float out the front doors or some such.

Page 10: Make sure that when the supermarket event is covered on the TV news, the reporter does not refer to "bombs" or an "explosion."

Page 11: The villain's line relating to his intention to blow up the pharmacy "to smithereens, baby" is unacceptable. However, if all direct bombing elements are removed from the script, this line may remain as a figure of speech.

Please substitute the label on the bag that reads "Heat Bombs" with something like "Heat Pellets."

Page 13: It will not be acceptable for the villain to say, "There is a bomb on the bus. So I says the bus goes boom, baby."

Page 15: The devices put on the villain's car must be of a fantasy type—something that doesn't result in a harmful explosion. It will not be acceptable for the car to "explode" with the villain still inside it, or for us to see the "charred remains."

[Defense]

## WRITE-OFFS

*From the transcript of Pennel Phlander Irwin v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue, a trial held in January 1996 at the United States Tax Court in San Francisco. The IRS charged that Irwin, who is the author of five unpublished novels, including Forever Three Friday, Great Woods Poppy, and Positively People, had taken improper deductions for business expenses on his federal income-tax forms for 1990, 1991, and 1992. Last October, Judge Peter J. Panuthos ruled that Irwin had "not met his burden of proof" in defense of the deductions.*

THE COURT: Mr. Irwin, please explain your research expenses.

PENNEL PHLANDER IRWIN: Materials for research are items I am purchasing so that I can research their use and then relay that in literary form in my books. Interview research expenses are incurred when I am trying to gain information on different types of subject matter. For instance, Scott Keithley is listed





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*You*, by Mel Leipzig, a Trenton, New Jersey, artist. Leipzig's paintings were on display last November at Gallery Henoch in New York City.

under interview research materials. Scott Keithley happens to be a dentist, and I was getting information on dental hygiene and dental practices, which I learned about firsthand.

THE COURT: Was he your dentist?

IRWIN: Scott Keithley? Yes. So, part of the service I'm paying for

THE COURT: What was the fifteen dollars for? What did Scott Keithley do for you? Did he clean your teeth?

IRWIN: For the fifteen dollars?

THE COURT: Yeah.

IRWIN: Okay, well, when I'm paying for a service, I prefer—I pay both for the physical service as well as for the information that person provides. The fifteen dollars, geez, right offhand, I can't remember if that was for cleaning services or what, but part of that was the information that he was providing, which went into my writing.

THE COURT: Okay. How about education expenses?

IRWIN: For 1990, the main part of the education expenses involved renting a dormitory space for my research assistant. In the course of my research I realized I would love to find

out what dormitory experiences were like in California. So my daughter agreed to move into a dormitory at California State University, Sacramento. I paid for the dormitory, both to get her in there and so I would have direct access to dormitory life and she could also, by living there, report back to me her impressions about dormitory living.

THE COURT: Okay.

IRWIN: Because it was not necessarily required for her education that she live in the dormitory.

THE COURT: Okay. How about supplies? It looks like these were disallowed by the tax commissioner in full for all three years—1990, 1991, and 1992. And in 1991 and 1992, it looks like they went up substantially.

IRWIN: Uh-hmm. Yes. Okay. These supplies basically fell under material research expenses. Yeah, basically that and reference research expenses.

THE COURT: So, many of these expenses relate to the purchase of books? For example, "Costco: novel writing research materials," or "Macy's: novel writing research materials." What—what does that mean?

IRWIN: Ah, they, hmm. They could be any



number of items that I would need to take and research as far as how a product is used. It could be clothing for costuming.

THE COURT: The court's not really clear. What is it that you purchased? Did you purchase an item, a commodity, a piece of clothing, and then write about it?

IRWIN: Oh. You mean as in—

THE COURT: What did you get? What did you physically get for \$148.17 on February 9, 1990, at Costco?

IRWIN: Okay. It can involve any number of materials that I would be purchasing at Costco. It could be clothes, it could be tools, it could be fixtures, anything that I'm using that I need to research as far as how that material—

THE COURT: So you buy a kitchen chair. That would be listed as a research material?

IRWIN: If I'm using it in the research toward one of my writing projects, yes. Anything, basically, that I purchase is being used for my writing.

THE COURT: So on April 19, 1990, when you buy something at Lockeford County Flower, do you think you, for \$42.50, do you think you bought flowers?

IRWIN: Physically, I probably did. However, what I am purchasing is an item I can research.

THE COURT: So you buy flowers and then you write about the flowers? You write about purchasing the flowers? What do you write about?

IRWIN: No, the—the type of flower arrangement I purchase would go into one of my works in progress, in the description of a table setting, or in the description of a kind of flower arrangement that might be given or received. Unless you have—unless you can obtain the object, you can't very well do research on it, as far as the colors, the textures, what you use that object for.

THE COURT: What did you do with the flowers after you used them? Did you throw them away?

IRWIN: I would presume so, yes, because that would be an expendable item that—they only last for so long.

THE COURT: Okay. Mr. Irwin, do you agree with the tax commissioner's adjustment of \$1,421 from your Schedule C for 1991? The commissioner says that that was not self-employment income but rather it was a gambling winning.

IRWIN: Whew. I—you know, I concur with—with the logic, and the commissioner's trying to be helpful. The only problem that I have is, when I look at it, it was during a research trip to Reno, and I went in and researched

what gambling on video-poker machines was like, since that was sort of unique, and I happened to make a winning. And I figured that since I made the winning while I was doing research for writing, I should take it as writing income.

THE COURT: Okay.

IRWIN: I was just trying to put it in the right context.

[Essay]

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GREENSPAN

*From "Central Bankism," by Edward Luttwak, in the November 14, 1996, issue of the London Review of Books. Luttwak is a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. His essay "The Middle-Class Backlash" appeared in the January 1996 issue of Harper's Magazine.*

A fanatical religion has swept the United States and Europe in recent years: central bankism. Its high priests, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and his European counterparts, believe in a devil and are dedicated to the struggle against it—in this case, inflation. Common sense suffices to oppose high inflation and to fear hyperinflation as the death of currencies, but it takes the absolute faith of religion to refuse even very moderate inflation at the cost of immoderate unemployment and economic stagnation, as the Europeans have been doing, or at the cost of slow economic growth for years on end, as in the United States.

Like many religions, central bankism has its sanctuaries, and these inspire as much awe as any great cathedral—from the majestic Bank of England to the Greek temples of the Federal Reserve in Washington, from the solidity of the Banque de France to the massive modernity of Germany's Bundesbank. In these sanctuaries the pontiffs constantly strive to assert their independence from secular politicians, mere mortals voted in and out of office by the ignorant masses. Although, like other public officials, they receive their salaries from the taxpayers, central bankers claim the right to ignore the public will. They invariably remain in office for terms of papal length often prematurely renewed for fear of disturbing financial markets. And when these high priests do at last retire, they are frequently elevated to financial



sancthood, then every fleeting opinion reverentially treasured, their candidacy for any position of special trust eagerly accepted, their very names talismanic, is with Paul Volcker on Wall Street and far beyond.

Because their power derives largely from their supreme command of the crusade against the devil of inflation, central bankers naturally see his insidious presence everywhere. Very often, they detect "disturbing signs of incipient inflation," or even "alarming warnings of mounting inflationary pressure" in output, employment, and wage statistics that many respected economists view with equanimity or find downright reassuring. True, every time new statistical indicators are published, there are calls from some quarters for slightly lower interest rates to achieve a bit more growth, but such outbreaks of heresy are easily quashed by the high priests.

**S**imple, definitive proof of the doctrinal supremacy of central bankism can be found in the fact that any policy initiative branded as "inflationary" is usually rejected out of hand. By contrast, the term "deflationary" has no resonance at all. Although it is occasionally used as a purely technical term to express falling prices, deflation might more properly be used to describe what the central bankers have given us: overrestrictive

fiscal and monetary policies that strangle growth, policies that in the 1930s brought about the Great Depression, political chaos, dictatorship, and war. Inflation hits the instrument of money while deflation has an immediate impact on people, denying them the opportunity to work and earn, and to buy goods and services, which would allow others to work and earn. Indeed, in the United States central bankism has resulted in falling real wages; although unemployment at the end of 1996 remained at 5.3 percent, more than half of all American jobs pay less now in constant dollars than they did twenty years ago. No wonder, as President Clinton keeps boasting, millions of new jobs keep being created (a quarter of a million were created last December alone): American labor is so cheap.

Of course, it is true that real incomes and real wealth cannot be created by printing money, that inflation hurts the poor disproportionately as well as rich bondholders and everyone who lives on a fixed income. Inflation benefits smart speculators and all who are already wealthy enough to own real estate and other marketable assets. It is also true that, if unchecked, inflation naturally accelerates into hyperinflation, which not only destroys currencies but also degrades economic efficiency—as people run to spend their suitcases full of bank notes instead of working—and may even wreck the entire financial structure of a society.

Inflation, then, is bad; and hyperinflation, very bad indeed. But it is just as true that deflation is bad and that hyperdeflation is disastrous. In economic theory, deflation should have no consequences at all, because any upward movement in the value of money (i.e., falling prices) can be nullified by a compensating reduction in wages. In practice, however, prices resist going down, and very few employees anywhere at any time accept wage cuts without the most bitter resistance—even in the United States, with its mass immigration, increasingly unfavorable labor market, and weak unions. Contrary to theory, then, deflation starves economies; with deflation, moreover, people feel poorer and spend less simply because the nominal value of their houses and other assets is falling. Inflation and deflation should therefore be viewed as equally objectionable; they should resound in our ears as equivalent evils, like flood and drought. It is the greatest triumph of central bankism that only inflation is viewed as sinful.

**H**ow did the ascendance of the central bankers come about? How did the employees of one public institution assume a priestly status, becoming more powerful in many ways than prime ministers or presidents? One heard very

[Executive Order]

## THE ROOT OF YELTSIN'S TROUBLES?

*From a memo distributed throughout the Kremlin last October by the office of President Boris Yeltsin. Translated from the Russian by Sarah Brown.*

TO: All Departments in the Administration of  
the President of the Russian Federation  
Respected Chiefs!

Often original documents—i.e., letters from Boris Nikolaiovich Yeltsin, his decrees, and his orders—are joined together by your workers with staples. This makes it difficult for the President. In fact, this practice holds up the President's very decisions. We ask that you heed this request to stop the use of staples.

R. Sivulev  
Aide to the President





*From Collective Memory I, a series of prints by Andrew Bordwin. To create the series, Bordwin took Polaroid photographs, used a computer to enlarge the images, and then reproduced them on watercolor paper with an Iris ink jet printer. The series was on display last month at On View . . . , a gallery in New York City.*

little about them in the three postwar decades of rapid economic growth, sharply rising incomes, and widening prosperity. Only during the Thirties, not coincidentally the years of the Great Depression, were they as prominent as they are now. A world in crisis followed with bated breath every pronouncement from the lips of the Bank of England's Montagu Norman, Germany's Hjalmar Schacht, and their lesser colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic. With tragic consequences for millions of American families, and far more terrible repercussions in Europe, governments almost everywhere accepted the central bankers' remedy for the Depression, which was to deflate, deflate, deflate, by cutting public spending and restricting credit. One result was that Hitler's rise to power was accelerated by mass unemployment.

We now know that the central bankers were completely wrong. The only way to refloat the sinking economies of the Thirties was to start the chain reaction of demand by sharply increasing government spending, and never mind a bit of inflation. Had the big boys of the world

economy led the way, by inflating and by importing first, to generate more demand for their own exports, everyone would have come out just fine. But only a few adventurous souls, and only one reputable economist, John Maynard Keynes, dared to contradict what seemed to be common sense, and even they were hesitant. The central bankers, by contrast, were utterly certain that they were right, just as they are now; and they gave exactly the same advice that they are giving now, the only advice central bankers ever give: tighten credit, restrict spending, hold back demand.

Another reason for the rise of central bankism as the prevailing wisdom of the age is institutional: while the value of money is protected with fierce determination by the central bankers, industry and labor have no such exalted defenders, only mere governments and parliaments now greatly inhibited by the decrees of central bankism.

**L**ike all religions, central bankism demands sacrifices from the faithful. Catholics,



Jews, and Muslims have it rather easy by comparison: central bankism resembles the Aztec faith in its demands for human sacrifice. So far, we have yet to see central bankers climb pyramids to cut out the palpitating hearts of young men and virgins with obsidian knives, but not a single one of them hesitates to impose levels of unemployment that year after year deprive millions of young people of the opportunity even to start a career. Indeed, the central bankers have all the moral certitude of the Aztec priests. Gathered together last August with their host Alan Greenspan, in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the central bankers congratulated themselves at length on their success in reducing inflation by keeping real interest rates high; they did not pause to deplore miserable growth rates. As it is, the estimated 1996 growth rates for the G7 countries (the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan) average out at 1.8 percent, which guarantees rising unemployment simply because both the size of the labor force and its productivity are increasing somewhat faster. Still, in Jackson Hole the central bankers competed for the prize of calling for the lowest inflation rate.

France was the surprise winner of this deflation Olympics. Untroubled by an economy not merely stagnant but in rigor mortis, with a level of unemployment—above 12 percent—unseen since the Great Depression, the French were enormously proud of their amazingly low 1.3 percent inflation rate, a full 0.2 percent below Germany's! It was as if the defeats of 1870 and 1940 had been undone.

Indeed, there was heady talk of ascending to the paradise of central bankism: a zero inflation rate. It would only be a matter of eliminating budget deficits by scrapping more welfare programs, and of maintaining interest-rate discipline, orders easily handed down from the magnificent heights of Jackson Hole to the vulgar crowd of Europe's 18 million unemployed.

As for Alan Greenspan, he has nothing whatsoever to worry about, because in the United States, slow growth (just over 2 percent annually), a 5 percent unemployment rate, and falling wages are all now accepted as perfectly normal, or even as good news. The stage has been reached in which any spurt of faster growth, any fall in unemployment, is very bad news indeed for Wall Street and for all of us, because it will only lead the Federal Reserve to increase interest rates in order to "cool down the economy."

In fact, nobody knows the exact rate of unemployment below which wages start rising, pushing prices upward. Economists continue to debate the issue, but the Fed takes no chances. Greenspan invariably errs on the side of caution: a million people can lose their jobs because

higher interest rates might, perhaps, keep inflation at one-tenth of one percent below what it might have been. In the name of the holy struggle against inflation, the central bankers decree, the public must sacrifice.

[Observations]

## GENIUSES WITH BACK HAIR

*From "A Statistical Association Between Liberal Body Hair Growth and Intelligence," a study by Dr. A. G. Alias. Alias, a psychiatrist at the Chester Mental Health Center in Chester, Illinois, read the paper last July in London at the Eighth Congress of the Association of European Psychiatrists.*

**S**ince liberal body hair appears to be a characteristic of lower forms of primates, such as apes, people have an instinctual aversion to the idea that hairy men may be smarter than those who are relatively hairless.

That there is an association between chest/body-hair growth (including beard growth) and general intelligence struck me in 1973 when I met a very hirsute African-American psychiatrist. It occurred to me that while this man was quite hairy, the famous black boxers of the time were not. I discussed this idea with him, it caught his fancy, and he gave me some data that reinforced my initial impression. Since then, I have checked and rechecked many samples, and I have discovered a definite pattern.

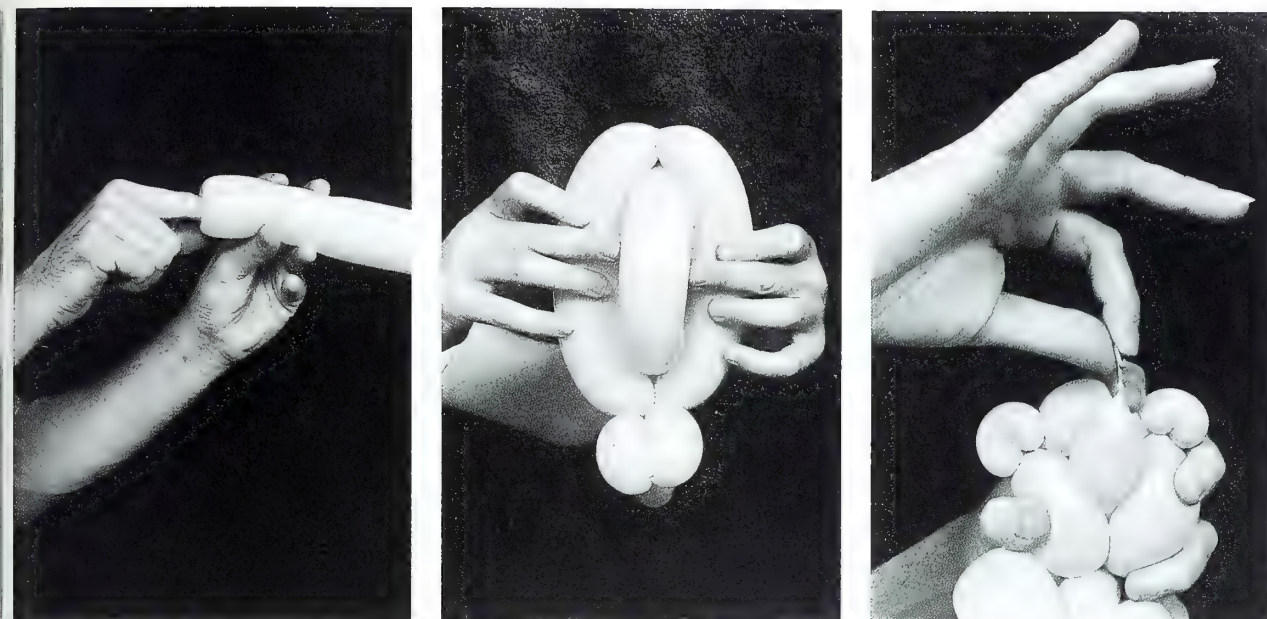
1. A sample composed of male members of the American Mensa society (who have very high IQs) yielded significantly higher body-hair ratings than those from two control samples of Caucasian men. On a scale of 1 to 9, about 50 percent of the Mensa men had body-hair ratings higher than 5, whereas only 31 percent and 28 percent of the two control samples had similarly high ratings.

2. Thirty-five percent of male U.S. National Academy of Sciences members had body-hair ratings of 6 or higher, compared with 21 percent and 19.4 percent of two control groups taken from the general population.

3. Body-hair ratings of 6 or higher were noted in 42 percent of a group of 103 South Indian male medical students, compared with 12 percent of 101 South Indian manual laborers.

4. Only one of the fifteen (6.6 percent) Caucasian heavyweight boxing champions of the past one hundred years had a body-hair rating higher than 5.





From the photographs illustrating balloon-twisting tricks in various books by balloon artist Aaron Hsu-Flanders. Step 1 of "Pig/Hippopotamus" (left) and Step 10 of "Snail" (center) are from Hsu-Flanders's book *More Balloon Animals*. Step 22 of "Winnie the Pooh" (right) is from *Balloon Cartoons and Other Favorites*. Hsu-Flanders lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

5. Among thirty Caucasian bodybuilders, the fourteen with sixteen or more years of education were significantly more hirsute than the sixteen with twelve years of education.

What my findings show is that if a man is very hirsute, the chances are high that he will be above average in intelligence. My findings, however, do not prove that the hairier you are the smarter you will be. I have come across many confirmed mentally retarded black and white men who are conspicuously hirsute.

Some anecdotal examples: Albert Einstein was (body) hairless, as are Bill Gates (probably), Bill Clinton, and Ronald Reagan. John F. Kennedy was notably hirsute but far less so than his brothers, Bobby and Ted. George Bush had only a few hairs on his chest. Robin Williams, whose brain works almost like a supercomputer, is markedly hirsute, and Peter Sellers was still more apelike. Chess champion Gary Kasparov is very hirsute, and so is his Indian rival Viswanathan Anand, but Anatoly Karpov is probably smooth-skinned.

Lastly, I came across a pair of fraternal twins in a colleague's high school yearbook. According to the descriptions that accompanied their pictures, one of the brothers, who was not conspicuously hirsute, was athletic but his academic achievements were rather modest. The other brother, "Fuzzy," was valedictorian, class president, and had won several academic awards.

[Scale]

## LAUGHER CURVE

From a ranking of "styles of everyday humorous conduct" developed by Kenneth H. Craik et al. The researchers asked a group of university students to rate the behavior traits below on a scale of 1 to 9, with 9 being "extremely desirable" and 1 being "extremely undesirable." The study appeared in the Fall 1996 issue of *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, published by Mouton de Gruyter in Berlin.

TRAIT	AVG. RATING
Appreciates the humorous potential of persons and situations	8.3
Displays a quick wit and a ready repartee	7.8
Uses good-natured jests to put others at ease	7.6
Has an infectious laugh that starts others laughing	7.5
Finds intellectual wordplay enjoyable	7.1
Prefers recounting comic episodes from real life to telling jokes	6.5
Enjoys kidding, ribbing, and joshing others	6.1
Uses humor to gain the affection and approval of others	5.8
Jokes about problems to make them seem ridiculous or trivial	5.7



Finds humor in the everyday behavior of animals	5.2
Imitates the humorous style of a professional comedian	5.2
Reveals otherwise unacknowledged motives through humorous behavior	5.2
Enjoys limericks and nonsense rhymes	4.9
Makes jokes about the macabre and the grotesque	4.5
Is droll	4.5
Has a reputation as a practical joker	4.5
Laughs without discriminating between more and less clever remarks	4.4
Emphasizes the humor of an anecdote with nudges and other gestures	4.3
Has a suggestive, insinuating laugh	4.3
Tells bawdy stories with gusto, regardless of audience	4.2
By smiling at certain points in discussions, focuses attention on awkward, embarrassing, or hidden issues	4.1
Does not hesitate to repeat a remark that was not duly appreciated	3.9
Relishes scatological anecdotes (bathroom humor)	3.6
Jokes about others' imperfections	3.5
Takes special delight in ethnic jokes	3.5
Spoils jokes by laughing before finishing them	3.5
Insists on explaining jokes after telling them	2.5

[Essay]

## A ROOM WITH TOO MUCH VIEW

*From A Place of My Own: The Education of an Amateur Builder, by Michael Pollan, to be published this month by Random House. Pollan is Editor-at-Large of Harper's Magazine.*

Look at a window long enough, and you begin to see that it is not only a material object but the embodiment of a relationship—between the self on one side of the glass and the wider world on the other. Whenever a window looks out on the street, it tells a story about the social world we inhabit; when its gaze is on the landscape, it usually has something to say about our relationship to nature.

When I was a boy my parents built a summer home on the beach that was designed in thrall to the modernist dream of transparency, and specifically to the utopian promise of plate glass: the elimination of the barriers that wall us off

from nature. The house was a modified A-frame built on the open plan, with its kitchen, living room, and dining area all flowing together. The facade of the house was almost entirely glazed: a picture window dominated one side, sliding glass doors the other, and, above, vertical plates of glass rose all the way up into the tall peak. Except for the slightest structural reinforcement, the glass was undivided: there were few things as architecturally unfashionable in 1965 as a muntin bar on a window.

A half-dozen other houses were similarly deployed along our strip of sand dune, and together they resembled a flock of weathered gray birds perched on a wire, all staring intently at the ocean ahead, none risking a sidelong glance. Indeed, our house had only a couple of windows on its side walls, and these were of the cheapest construction, strictly for ventilation. It was the big view that my parents had bought, and it was the big view and nothing else that our house was going to stare at.

One thing that struck me about our glass wall and its hundred-dollar view (aside from the fact that the living room was always too hot and you never entered it unless fully dressed, even though the only creature apt to look in was a gull) was that the ocean was best appreciated from the couch, as if you were watching a movie screen, which the proportions of the picture window closely approximated. It must be a convention of our visual culture that an image of roughly these proportions says, *Look no further: here's the whole picture*, because I can't remember ever feeling the urge to get up from the couch and take a closer look. A smaller or squarer window, on the other hand, seems to invite us to step up to it and peek out, to glimpse what lies beyond the frame on either side.

My parents' view also acquainted me with the peculiar distancing effect of plate glass. Ours was double-glazed—the technology that made glass walls feasible, if not quite practical—and unless the sliding glass door had been left ajar, the seal of the wall was complete. You saw the waves break white out beyond the dunes but heard nothing; watched the sea grass bend and flash under the breeze but felt nothing. There was a deadness to it, a quality of having already happened. The view seemed far away, static, and inaccessible, except of course to the eye.

Our picture window's horizontal format probably contributed to this impression. As painters understand, the horizontal dimension is the eye's natural field of play, the axis along which it ordinarily takes in the world. Compared with a vertical format, which is more likely to engage the whole body, inviting the viewer into the picture as if through a door, the



horizontal somehow seems cooler, disembodied, more cerebral.

Only much later did I understand that my parents' picture window contained its own implicit philosophy of nature, and it is perhaps not quite so benign a one as its air of sheer appreciativeness might have suggested. Granted, compared with the attitude of fear or antagonism toward the outdoors implied by the tiny windows you find on, say, an old colonial, the modern picture window tells a considerably friendlier story about nature, which it puts on a kind of pedestal. Yet like anything installed on a pedestal, nature in the picture window is held at arm's length, regarded as an aesthetic object. As its name implies, the picture window turns the stuff of nature into a landscape, the very idea of which implies separation and observation and passivity—nature as spectator sport, which suited my father the great indoorsman just fine.

**B**ut exactly what kind of landscape? For the picture window doesn't make a picture out of any old stretch of nature. Nobody ever placed one directly in front of a forest or the face of a boulder, and my parents never thought to put theirs on the wall that faced a grove of gnarled beetlebung trees, lovely as that was. No, a picture window must give the horizon its due, and the content of the view will always be something special, by which we usually mean "picturesque."

Implied in the very idea of a picture window is an assumption that there is a "special" nature entitled to our gaze and care, and an ordinary nature that is not. In this, the picture window is in tune ideologically with tourism and environmentalism, both of which lavish their attention on those landscapes that most nearly resemble wilderness—places unpeopled, timeless, and pristine; nature "out there"—at the expense of all those ordinary places where most of us live and work, and which often need just as much of our attention and care.

The picture window also tells a more subtle and insidious story about point of view, about the idea of a frame. By eliminating muntins (which call attention to the window as a window) and stretching out horizontally to the peripheries of our field of vision, the picture window suggests that its view of nature is perfectly objective and unmediated: *This is it, how it really is out there.* And the full-scale glass wall goes even further, dropping the "out there" from the claim, since now any distance between ourselves and nature has supposedly been eliminated. If the picture window resembles a pair of eyeglasses so large the wearer loses sight of the frame, the glass house is a pair of contact lens-

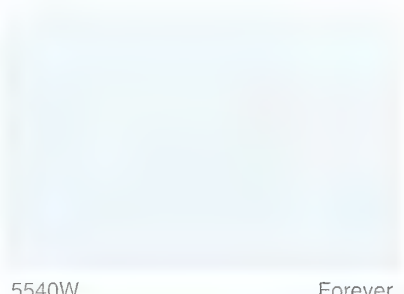
[Shades]

## THE BLUES



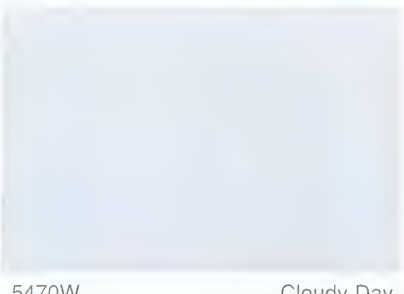
5540W

Forever



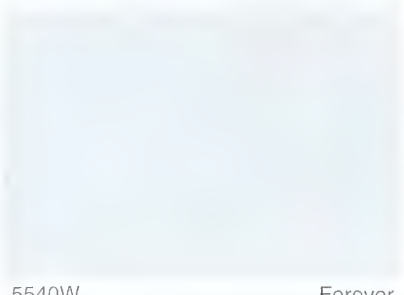
5540W

Forever



5470W

Cloudy Day



5540W

Forever

*From Remarks on Color, a series of paintings by Peter Wegner, a Portland, Oregon, artist. Wegner uses the actual colors, names, and code numbers of the standard system used by hardware stores for mixing paints. His work is currently on display at the Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art.*



es. The conceit of its more radical transparency is that the frame can be eliminated altogether, leaving us with a perfect apprehension of nature, a clear seeing with nothing interposed save this inconsequential pane of glass—whose own reality everything has been done to suppress. Could it be that one of the reasons picture windows seem so dated today is that we've learned to distrust any such claims to omniscience and objectivity?

But perhaps the tallest, and most thoroughly discredited, tale told by plate glass is of man's power and nature's benignity. The promise of modernity was that we could master nature with our technology and science, and what better way to express that mastery—flaunt it, even—than building walls and houses made of glass? Humankind has outgrown the need for shelter from nature, the glass wall declares; refuge can now give way to pure prospect. Even as a child, I was made aware of the absurdity of this particular conceit every time the weather bureau issued a hurricane warning for our stretch of Atlantic seaboard. My father and I would scamper up ladders to crisscross the great glass wall with webs of masking tape. The tape was supposed to help the glass withstand the gales, and these flimsy paper muntins did somehow make us feel marginally safer as the wind blew. After a few years of hurricane alerts, however, the glass wall and its big view had been scarred by the fossilized traces of yellowing tape glue—a fitting rebuke to the dream of a perfect transparency.

[Equipment]

## SURROUND SOUND

*From an anecdote by Graham Nash that was posted last May on HyperRust, a Web site devoted to Neil Young. The story first appeared in a booklet that accompanied CSN, a 1991 set of four compact discs by Crosby, Stills & Nash.*

**I** once went down to Neil's ranch, and he rowed me out to the middle of the lake. Then he waved at someone invisible, and music started to play from the countryside. I realized Neil had his house wired as the left speaker and his barn wired as the right speaker. And from the shore Elliot Mazer, his engineer, shouted, "How is it?" And Neil shouted back, "More barn!"

[Fiction]

## THE BASEMENT WAR

*From "Chez Lambert," by Jonathan Franzen, in the Summer 1996 issue of The Paris Review; the story is part of a novel to be published next year by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Franzen's essay "Perchance to Dream" appeared in the April 1996 issue of Harper's Magazine.*

**I**t's the fate of most Ping-Pong tables in home basements eventually to serve the ends of other, more desperate games. When Alfred retired he appropriated the eastern end of the table for his banking and correspondence. At the western end was the portable color TV on which he'd intended to watch the local news while sitting in his great blue chair but which was now fully engulfed by *Good Housekeepings* and the seasonal candy tins and baroque but cheaply made candleholders that Enid never quite found time to transport to the Nearly New consignment shop. The Ping-Pong table was the one field on which the civil war raged openly. At the eastern end Alfred's calculator was ambushed by floral-print pot holders and souvenir coasters from the Epcot Center and a device for pitting cherries that Enid had owned for thirty years and never used; while he, in turn, at the western end, for absolutely no reason that Enid could ever fathom, ripped to pieces a wreath made of spray-painted pinecones, filberts, and Brazil nuts.

To the east of the Ping-Pong table lay the workshop that housed his metallurgical lab, the industry underpinning the seamless prosperity of the house above. The gray dust of evil spells and the enchanted cobwebs of a place that time had forgotten cloaked the thick insulating bricks of the electrical arc furnace, the Hellmann's Real Mayonnaise jars filled with exoric rhodium, with sinister cadmium, with stalwart bismuth. Something as daily and friendly as a pencil still occupied the random spot on the workbench where Alfred had laid it in a different decade; the passage of so many years imbued the pencil with a kind of enmity.

Worse than a palace in ruins is a palace abandoned and decaying and untouched: if it were ruined it could be buried. A ceramic crucible of something metallurgical still sat inside the furnace. Asbestos mitts hung from a nail beneath two certificates of U.S. patents, the frames warped and sprung by dampness. The only dust-free objects in the room were a wicker love seat on a drop cloth, a can of Rustoleum and some brushes, and a couple of YUBAN coffee





From *Floral Arrangements*, a series of photographs taken with a pinhole camera by Roe Ethridge. His work was on display last September at the Anna Kustera Gallery in New York City. Ethridge lives in Atlanta.

cans that despite increasingly irrefutable olfactory evidence Enid chose not to believe were filling up with her husband's urine, because what earthly reason could he have, in a house with two and a half bathrooms, for peeing in a YUBAN can?

Until he retired, Alfred had slept in an armchair that was black. Between his naps he read *Time* magazine or watched *60 Minutes* or golf. On weeknights he paged through the contents of his briefcase with a trembling hand. The chair was made of leather that you could smell the cow in.

His new chair, the great blue one now situated to the west of the Ping-Pong table, was built for sleeping and sleeping only. It was overstuffed, vaguely gubernatorial. It smelled like the inside of a Lexus. Like something modern and medical and impermeable that you could wipe the smell of death off easily, with a damp cloth, before the next person sat down to die in it.

The chair was the only major purchase Alfred ever made without Enid's approval. I see him at sixty-seven, a retired mechanical engineer walking the aisles of one of those midwestern furniture stores that only people who consider bargains immoral go to. For his entire working life he has taken naps in chairs subordinate to Enid's color schemes, and now he has received nearly five thousand dollars in retirement gifts. He has come to the store to spend the better part of this on a chair that celebrates, through its stature and costliness, the only activity in which he is truly himself. After a life-

time of providing for others, he needs even more than deep comfort and unlimited sleep: he needs public recognition of this need. Unfortunately, he fails to consider that monuments built for eternity are seldom comfortable for short-term accommodation. The chair he selects is outsized in the way of professional basketball shoes. It's a lifetime chair—a mechanical engineer's chair, a chair designed to function under extraordinary stress, a chair with plenty of margin for error. On the minus side it's so much larger than any person who'd sit in it—is at once so yielding and so magnificent—that it forces its occupant into the postures of a sleeping child.

When Alfred went to China to see Chinese mechanical engineers, Enid went along, and the two of them visited a rug factory to buy a rug for their family room. They were still unaccustomed to spending money on themselves, and so they chose one of the least expensive rugs. It had a design from the *Book of Changes* in blue wool on a field of beige. The blue of the chair Alfred brought into the house a few years later vaguely matched the blue of the rug's design, and Enid, who was strict about matching, suffered the chair's arrival.

Soon, though, Alfred's hands began to spill decaffeinated coffee on the rug's beige expanses, and wild grandchildren from the Rocky Mountains left berries and crayons underfoot, and Enid began to feel that the rug was a mistake. It seemed to her that in trying to save money in life she had made many mistakes like



this. She reached the point of thinking it would have been better to buy no rug than to buy this rug. Finally, as Alfred went to sleep in his chair, she grew bolder. Her own mother had left her a tiny inheritance years ago, and

[Poem]

## LEGEND

By W. S. Merwin, in the December 1996 issue of Poetry. Merwin is the author, most recently, of *The Vixen*.

Our own city had the second highest  
VD rate in the country yielding  
only to Hagerstown Maryland  
we boasted aged somewhere around eleven  
taking credit for it thinking we might  
even be first it was fundamental  
knowledge closer to home than the famous  
roller coaster down at Rocky Glen  
which we agreed was one of the world's  
most dangerous with its hairpin trestle  
out over the water and the whole thing  
about to collapse a lady got on  
back in the summer with a baby  
and when they got off the baby was dead  
but the steady aura of the unspeakable  
emanated from figures like Jenny  
Dee the reigning madam whom we had not seen  
but we all knew she rode in a chauffeur-driven  
black Cadillac with flags on the fenders  
and was friends with the mayor the Chamber  
of Commerce and the police it was a mile  
exactly to the courthouse downtown  
by the shortcut over the embankment  
and along the weedy right-of-way to the iron  
truss across the already stove-black  
Lackawanna drunks who fell in there  
were known to be blown-up and all shades of  
blue  
by the time they were fished out on the South  
Side  
the paint was worn off the top of the truss  
where we ran across it into the smell  
of the gasworks which haunted us part way  
up the steep cobbles past the one gray house  
all by itself with its shades drawn tight  
and lights on in the daytime we never  
saw anyone go in or come out of there  
two dollars to the best of our belief  
on the far side of the street whispering  
through the cold echoes under the railroad bridge

she had made certain investments. Interest had been added to principal, certain stocks had performed rather well, and now she had an income of her own. She reconceived the family room in greens and yellows. She ordered fabrics. A paperhanger came, and Alfred, who was napping temporarily in the dining room, leaped to his feet like a man with a bad dream.

"You're redecorating *again*?"

"It's my own money," Enid said. "This is how I'm spending it."

"And what about the money I spent? What about the work I did?"

This argument had been effective in the past, but it didn't work now. "That rug is nearly ten years old, and we'll never get the coffee stains out," Enid answered.

Alfred gestured at his blue chair, which under the paperhanger's plastic drop cloths looked like something you might deliver to a power station on a flatbed truck. He was trembling with incredulity, unable to believe that Enid could have forgotten this crushing refutation of her arguments, this overwhelming impediment to her plans; it was as if all the unfreedom and impossibility in which he'd spent his seven decades of life were embodied in this four-year-old but (because of its high quality) essentially brand-new chair. He was grinning, his face aglow with the awful perfection of his logic.

"And what about the chair, then?" he said. "What about the chair?"

Enid looked at the chair. Her expression was merely pained, no more. "I never liked that chair."

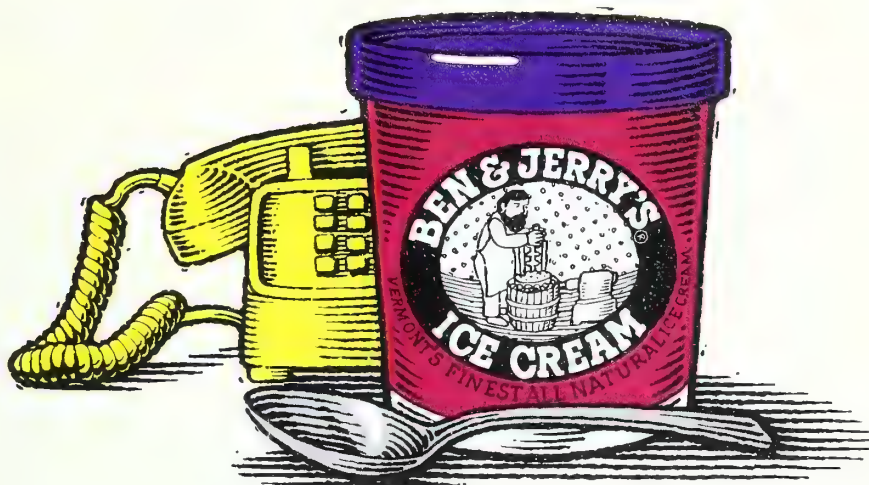
This was probably the most terrible thing she could have said to Alfred. The chair was the only sign he'd ever given of having a personal vision of the future. Enid's words filled him with such sorrow—he felt such pity for the chair, such solidarity with it, such astonished grief at its betrayal—that he pulled off the drop cloth and sank into its leather arms and fell asleep. (This is one way of recognizing a place of enchantment: a suspiciously high incidence of narcolepsy.)

When it became clear that both the rug and Alfred's chair had to go, the rug was easily shed. Enid advertised in the free local paper and netted a nervous bird of a woman who was still making mistakes and whose fifties came out of her purse in a disorderly roll that she unpeeled and flattened with shaking fingers.

But the chair? The chair was a monument and a symbol and could not be parted from Alfred. It could only be relocated, and so it went into the basement and Alfred followed. And so in the house of the Lamberts, as in the gerontocracy of which they were a part, as in the country as a whole, life came to be lived underground. ■



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# COLD COMFORT

Looking for the sun in  
Greenland's endless night

By Gretel Ehrlich

*Our country has wide borders;  
there is no man born has travelled  
round it.*

*And it bears secrets in its  
bosom of which no white  
man dreams.*

*Up here we live two  
different lives; in the Sum-  
mer, under the torch of  
the Warm Sun; in the  
Winter, under the lash of the  
North Wind.*

*But it is the dark and cold that  
make us think most.*

*And when the long Darkness  
spreads itself over the country,  
many hidden things are revealed,  
and men's thoughts travel along devi-  
ous paths.*

Blind Ambrosius

**T**his morning a sundog—a rain-  
bow-like ring around the sun—  
looms so large it seems to encircle the  
visible world. As I move, it moves. I  
watch it slide across something stuck: a  
ship that has frozen into the ice of Frobisher  
Bay. I am taking off from Iqaluit, a town in Arc-  
tic Canada where I've been stranded for several  
days, and as my plane taxis out onto the run-  
way, the sundog billows and shudders, dragging  
itself across black ice, too heavy to leave the  
ground. Then the plane does rise and so do the  
spectral rays of the sundog—a bright porthole  
into an Arctic winter's permanent twilight. I



pass through its wavering  
hoop and it breaks.

People always ask  
Why do you want to go  
north, especially at this  
time of year? There's  
nothing up there.  
But Greenlanders  
know the opposite

is true: "Summer is  
lots of hard work.

All we do is  
catch fish to feed  
our dogs through  
the winter. We

don't have time to  
visit or see one another.  
In winter the fjords

are paved with ice. We go  
out with our dogs every day.

That's when we are happy."

Which is why I'm on my way  
to Uummannaq, midway up the  
west coast, to travel by dogsled with

ten hunters to Thule—the northernmost  
part of the country—or as far as we can go.

I delight in the spare landscape out the  
plane window—ice oceans and ice mountains  
and clouds full of ice. So much of what Ameri-  
cans live with is an economic landscape—  
malls, stores, and movie theaters, ski slopes and  
theme parks—in which one's relationship to  
place has to do with boredom, undisciplined  
need, and envy. The Arctic's natural austerity  
is richness enough, its physical clarity a form of

*Gretel Ehrlich is the author of Questions of Heaven, which will be published by Beacon Press in March. Her last piece for Harper's Magazine, "Time on Ice," appeared in the March 1992 issue.*



voluptuousness. Who needs anything more?

The first time I visited Greenland was two summers after a near fatal lightning strike. My heart had stopped and started several times, and the recovery from ten thousand volts of electricity surging through my brain took years. To live nose to nose with death pruned away emotional edacity and the presumption of a future, even another sunrise. Life was an alternating current of dark and light. I lost consciousness hundreds of times, and death's presence was al-

wrap ourselves in wool blankets and sip coffee while a mechanic sweeps snow from the wings.

The blizzard that was stranding us has abated for a few hours, and by the time we get off the ground I can see a glow on the southern horizon where the sun will rise. But I am flying north, away from the sun, toward day that is like night and night that never becomes day. An old feeling of dread fills me: the claustrophobia of losing consciousness, of not being able to talk, move, or see.



ways lurking—a black form in the corner. Life was the light hovering at the top of the sea.

Greenland's treeless, icebound landscape appealed to me so much then that now, three years later, I've come back. Its continuously shifting planes of light are like knives thrown in a drawer. They are the layered instruments that carve life out of death into art and back to life. They teach me how to see.

**M**y plane from Iqaluit to Kangerlussuaq makes an unscheduled, early-morning departure. Every seat but two holds strapped-in cargo; the steward and I are the only passengers. It's thirty degrees below zero, made colder by a hard, northwesterly wind. In the cabin we

**W**e break the roof of the storm and fly east, then veer north, crossing the 63rd and the 65th parallels. The immanent sun is marked by a neon-pink eyebrow in the southeast. "The sun is lazy in winter," an old Inuit woman at the airport told me. "It worked so hard all summer, now it doesn't want to get up. It just lies there and sleeps all day."

Days before, flying from Kuujuaq, Quebec, I saw a ship frozen into the ice at Hudson Bay and thought of Henry Hudson's last journey in 1610–11, during which he had discovered the bay later named for him. After leaving winter quarters, some of the crew members, despairing of the continuous ice and fog and diminished food supply, refused to go farther. Moored to an



As these are the only data for the mentioned compounds and bound fluorine is not known, it is rather difficult to find a correlation between the alkyl fluorine content and the *fluorocarbon* and *fluorine* and the other substituents.

- **U**nder a thumb band are relative ease threaded with pink thread, still the author cut the red holes back into platelet, top piece, tone, for which to make one caution was. One are similar are the infanture of bit, find back a fast machine or a possible from them a little, been in place, a little to teach me less, on peculiar to the far north, that need time a light, light a speed, and a good time, light a good, dark, a good, a good.

It is morning, almost nine o'clock. Between Hilo and somewhere out over Baffin Bay, a low ridge, an arc of brilliance, a band of ice, line within beds of water that have no


and 1 between the two. Then brown-pinked  
tendrils to red light. A black band of fog he  
cannot the beam in the polar night a flaming

The truth is that only the *gallimauf*—the slave people—are afraid of the dark, whereas the *lames* like nothing better than long winter days of inactivity.

"If there is creation, there is a beginning,"  
 concluded the linguist and biologist.

"That was too full back," he said. "It was so full then, too full to know anything."

We land at the old harbor at Kangerlussuaq, transfer to a smaller plane, and fly north to Ilulissat. There, at midday, the sun is like a fire burning on the horizon, but after a few hours it drops out of sight.



Three days later, the helicopter to Ummannaq lifts up through lingering snow showers that have turned Ilulissat's few hours of daylight gray. Up above, over the waters of Disko Bay, the sun burns a hole on the horizon, its lone wake of light a torch striking north at the darkness into which we fly. Below, each iceberg is a miniature continent with its

own turquoise inlets and long fingered fjords, sharp peaks and sloping plains. Where an ice berg has collapsed into it, its broken parts have curled and are floating in black water; in other places, the ice floor has shattered into elongated rectangular like blocks of basaltic rock.

Instead of flying over the mountains, we fly way out and around the Nuussuaq Peninsula, a rough thumb of land that sticks out into Baffin Bay, separating the town of Ilulissat from Umaninguaq fjord. The idea is that it's safer to autorotate down onto ice than onto a snowy mountain. The father of my Greenlandic friend Aleqa Hammond drowned in this fjord when she was seven years old. He had been hunting when he fell through the ice with all his dogs. "I asked my



eland, and a flock of birds float within uprooted continent of ice. But out the other window, to the north, an inches-wide line has been hammered against the sea. We are flying into the earth. Indeed, that is the dilemma, the Arctic night for which I am bound.

"Do you see that coming?" the old woman Arnalug asks.

"What?"

"That's out there over the sea for the Doul come up, the great Doul."

The car creaks, and owl-like whistles stand against the day. Morning out one window, night out the other. For a moment I feel bad.



grandmother why people have to die, and she told me it was something arranged by the spirits. Some people have thick candles that last a long time. His wasn't so big. And so he went down to where the goddess of the sea lives."

Once the storm overtakes us, winds buffet the helicopter, an old Sikorsky. Its one blade of hope holds us above ice, ocean, sea goddesses, and the certain death that Arctic waters bring.

**U**ummannaq. Latitude 70. We follow the fjord where Aleqa's father disappeared. Snow-covered cliffs rise up, wounded and scarred by glacier traffic over their rocky flanks, and the last of the twilight disappears. We pass the village of Niaqornat out on the western end of the peninsula, where the mountains turn from rock to cloud. For a moment a half-moon comes up above the storm as if greeting us. Then we auger down into a chaos of snow, falling away from the gaudy metallic glow far to the south, toward black, pitching water where a smooth floor of ice should have been.

**I**'m in Uummannaq again, a town of 1,400 people and 6,000 dogs perched on a rock island, cast off from Greenland near the head of a fjord. Long ago the sun stopped rising here, and I can only wonder if it will ever come again. It's 3:00 P.M. and the lights are on all over the settlement. What is called day here is something else entirely; here the sky has not yet become a lamp for human beings. I only want to sleep.

Friends have arranged a house for me. It is reached by a long series of rickety wooden stairs over steep, snow-covered rock. At the top sits a two-room house, uninsulated and with no running water, that looks down on the town and harbor below. From my window I can see the grocery store, the post office, the warehouse, the administration building, and the bakery on one side of the harbor; on the other, the Uummannaq Hotel, the Grill-Baren—a Greenlandic-style fast-food place—and a clinic; and on the far side, the Royal Greenland fish factory. Fishing boats are frozen into the harbor, and the seal hunters' skiffs are laid helter-skelter on top of the ice.

**F**our P.M. looks like midnight, and the dog noise is cacophonous. Bundled up in wool pants, down parka, and sealskin mittens with dog-hair ruffs at the wrist, I trudge through a village lined with prim Danish-style houses painted yellow, blue, or green. Once, the Inuit people lived in peat, stone, and whalebone houses that in winter were lined with rime ice. When the sun returned they removed the roofs to let the rooms thaw.

Each yard has a sled, twelve or fourteen Greenlandic huskies (each chained on a long line), a drying rack hung with halibut to feed the dogs, and seal- and polar-bear skins pulled taut on stretchers and leaned against the house to dry.

Kids shoot by, four to a sled, narrowly missed by a dogsled climbing the hill the other way. Men and women push prams with babies whose tiny hands reach up to touch dangling mobiles of soft-sided whales and seals. Female dogs in heat

THE SUN BURNS A HOLE IN THE HORIZON,  
ITS LONG WAKE OF LIGHT A TORCH STRIKING NORTH  
AT THE DARKNESS INTO WHICH WE FLY

run loose through town, as do all puppies, and as each passes through a new neighborhood of chained dogs, howls and moans erupt—the sounds of excitement and longing. I feel rather unnecessary in this world of dogs. Local taxis zoom up and down the hills, taking grocery shoppers home, and through the window of a tiny woodworking shop whose lights are on, it is impossible not to see two graphic posters—beaver shots—of naked white women on the wall.

**M**orning. The current crisis is that the fjords have not iced over. Without ice, there is no way to get to other villages. We are prisoners here, and my dogsled trip to the north may be doomed.

Far out near the head of the fjord there is a piece of ice shaped like a heart within a heart-shaped opening of black water. My own heart—which stopped once and started again unaided—is almost too cold to beat, and anyway, for whom? Down there in the water the sea goddess lives. Her long hair is tangled and full of lice, and no one will comb it clean. She is unhappy, the old people say, and there are no *angakkoqs*—shamans—to pacify her. That is why there is no ice.

**T**oday I meet a man who knows all about trees but has never seen one growing. He's the local dogsled maker. Each district has a distinct sled-making style.

The shop is high-ceilinged, with handsome Danish-modern workbenches where sleds of different sizes are being constructed. As we walk between them he explains that for the runners, which must be strong but flexible for traveling over rough ice or rock, he buys whole trees from Denmark that have been split in half and air-dried. When cutting and shaping them he is careful to match the left, or outer concave, side



of the log to the left side of the sled, and the right, or inner convex, side to the right side. Otherwise the runners will break, he tells me.

Sleds vary in size according to function. The long sleds used to hunt narwhal in the spring, when the sea ice is breaking up, are eighteen feet long, whereas sleds for local travel and seal

## AGAINST THE DOGS' CONSTANT CONVERSATION ABOUT SOCIAL HIERARCHY—URGENT MATTERS OF FOOD, SEX, AND RANK—I LIE ALONE IN MY BED

hunting may be only six or eight feet long. On sleds to be used for long trips at any time of the year, he reinforces the handles and joints with sheet metal, and the crossbars that make up the floor of the sled must be fastened at alternating lengths into the runner. If not, the runner will break through the grain of the wood.

It's Friday afternoon, and already the other workers in the shop are drinking warm Tuborg beer. On the floor I lay a topographical map of the Ummannaq Fjord and the Nuussuaq Peninsula. They gather around to show me which canyon they go up to get across the top of the mountains, where they sleep at night (there are huts along the way), and where hunters the year before were rescued by helicopter after the piece of ice they were standing on broke away during a storm. They also show me where friends have disappeared through the ice—dogs, dogsleds, and all.

When I ask if the ice will come this winter, they look out the windows and shrug. Then the sled maker says, "The time between the full moon and the new moon—that is when ice always comes. When the weather grows calm and very cold. If there are no more snowstorms, there will be ice."

**Q**ilaq taatuq. The sky is dark. Seqineq. The sun. Siku. Ice. Tarraq. Shadow. Aput. Snow. Tartoq. Darkness. Kisimiuppunga. I am alone. That's my vocabulary lesson for the day from a mimeographed Greenlandic-English dictionary used by Allied troops during World War II, with words about bombs, warships, torpedoes, and German-speaking people. In reading the expedition notes of Knud Rasmussen, I learn that words used in seances are different from secular words, so that the shamanic word for sea is *aqitsoq* (the soft one), rather than the usual *imaq*.

By the time I walk home from the sled maker's shop, the skim of ice is gone and the pathway out to the annual ice used for drinking water has gone to liquid.

At my house I read about dark nebulae—immense clouds composed of the detritus of dying stars. Their function is unclear, but their effect in the universe is to "produce visual extinction." Yet the nebulae themselves are detectable because of "the obscuration they cause." I look up at the sky. The dark patches between constellations are not blanks but dense interstellar obstructions through which light from distant stars cannot pass. They are known variously as the Snake, the Horsehead, the Coalsack. Darkness is not an absence but a rich and dense presence, a kind of cosmic chocolate, a forest of stellar events whose existence is known only by its invisibility.

**P**olar days are almost the same as polar nights, and anyway, the streetlights in town are always on. I try to keep to a schedule—coffee in the morning, dinner at night, then sleep—but the schedule slides into the body's own understanding of constant dark. I sleep when I should eat and eat in the middle of the night. A recent study suggests that the eye may have its own biological clock, separate from the one in the brain. Now it's possible to think of eyes as circadian timepieces with resettable daily rhythms in the retina that orchestrate the ebb and flow of the hormone melatonin. In the dark and near-dark, I wonder what dances my eye rhythms are making and if, upon reentering the world of all-day sun, I will be blind.

**A**nn Andreassen is a Faroe Islander who followed a boyfriend to Greenland and decided to stay. Her house is next door to the Children's House she runs for children whose own homes have been marred by domestic violence or drugs. In the middle of the night a little girl is brought in. She has just witnessed the beating of her mother. The policeman who went to the scene is a friend of the family's, and, as in all Greenland towns, there is no bureaucratic tangle and no prison, just a firm suggestion that the child spend the night elsewhere.

Ann has left her own child, who is sick with the flu, to attend to the newcomer. Badly shaken, the girl is given hot chocolate and cookies, a fresh nightgown and toothbrush, then put to bed. The Children's House is modern, spotless and cheerful with a capacious kitchen, living and arts area, computers and paints and traditional crafts for the kids. But the stories Ann can tell are a litany of tragedies—the inevitable consequences of a fiercely self-sufficient people meeting up with modern European life, despite or maybe because of Denmark's altruistic socialism.



**M**y daily walk has been the one constant. Down the stairs from my perched green house, I stroll along the rocky edge of town, past the inlet where yesterday a wave generated by a calving glacier washed fifteen anchored boats onto the road. The Danes were so busy trying to save their pleasure boats that they forgot about the dogs tied up at the shore. The dogs drowned.

**A** week later. Now it's mid-January. A distant sound of thunder jolts me: a glacier calves, and waves made from the iceberg's birth undulate toward shore. Then something catches my eye: low down, from between two white cliffs, a full moon begins to rise—almost too enormous for the mountains that flank it. I stand mesmerized on the edge of the island. For some time the moon rises so slowly I'm afraid it will drop back down. But moons are not betrayed by gravity. Soon it tops the icy towers at the head of the fjord and brightens, suddenly rufescent, as if it had just been cut from ice and thrown up in the air—the absent sun's pale twin.

**M**orning. I'm not living on earth or ice but on rock and the sharp tooth of Uummannaq Mountain. At eleven the peak catches light like the poisoned tip of an arrow, and the cliffs that gave birth to the moon last night are pink, crimson, and gold. At noon there is a bit of light in the sky, but not enough to read by.

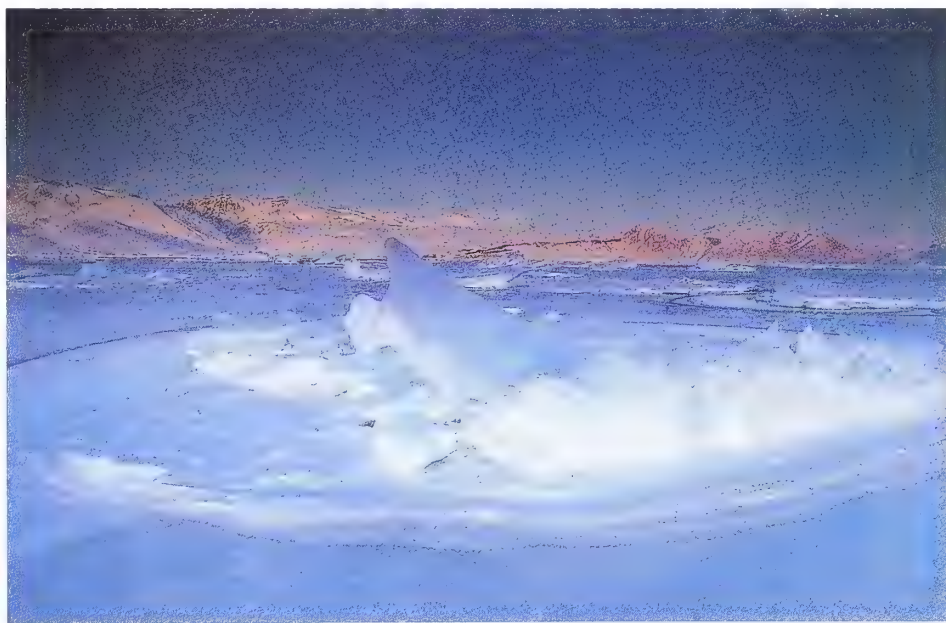
Later, maybe 2:00 A.M. Against the dogs' constant conversation about social hierarchy—urgent matters of food, sex, and rank, and the general angst of being chained on dirty patches of rock and snow—I lie alone in my bed. The moon is down. Unable to sleep, I drink a cheap bottle of blanc de noir—the white of the black, the foam of the night, the light hidden within dark grapes and made to sparkle. But how do they get white from black? How do they separate the two?

When all the blanc is gone there is only noir, *obscurum per obscuris*, a dark path leading through darkness. The Inuit never made much of beginnings, and now I know why. Because no matter what you do in winter, no matter how deep you dive, there is still no daylight

and none of the comprehension that comes with light. Endings are everywhere, visible within the invisible, and the timeless days and nights tick by.

**I** am invited to dinner at a local painter's house with Ann and her husband, Ole Jorgen. Ole Jorgen arrives first to drop off a bottle of wine, and an ashtray almost hits him in the head. The artist—S.—and his wife are fighting. S. has been drunk for days. But they insist we come in. S. has recently suffered a stroke and can't walk. Holding court in his unkempt house, on a low daybed amid empty beer bottles, he looks like a doomed, deposed king, but his conversation is bright.

S.'s Greenlandic wife sets dinner down on



the coffee table. It's a traditional soup made with seal meat and potatoes, accompanied by a shrimp and cabbage salad. (Lettuce doesn't survive the trip from Denmark to Greenland.) As the evening wears on, S.'s talk is reduced to expletives and non sequiturs. He adopts a British accent and says "I caun't" over and over, inserting it nonsensically between anyone's words. It's funny at first, but once I realize there will be no end to it I grow bored.

The wine has turned to vinegar; in the middle of the meal S.'s wife vomits in the kitchen sink. As we try to finish dinner fire engines roar by toward Ann's house, and we race outside after them. They pass her house and continue up the hill. My intention is to keep going, but Ole Jorgen says, "You're the guest of honor!"

I talk to S. about his paintings, and he gives



me some sketches he's made of the harbor, white cliffs, and icebergs. The man can draw. When the evening finally ends, I thank him for the gifts. Alone in my green house, I bundle myself up in my made-to-order Feathered Friends sleeping bag and sit by the window. The tranquillity of perpetual night is like starch in my brain.

**I**n winter, light sources are reversed. Snow-covered earth is a light, and the sky is a blotter that soaks up everything visible. There is no sun, but there's a moon that lives on borrowed time and borrowed light. Home late from hunting, two men pull a sledge laden with freshly killed seals up a hill, dripping a trail of blood in the snow. As I doze off, I dream that the paths are all red and the sky is ice and the water is coal. I take a handful of water and draw with it: in the frozen sky, I draw a black sun.

Later I can't sleep. The half-moon's slow rising seems like a form of exhaustion, with night trying to hold the moon's head down underwater. It bobs up anyway, and I, its captive audience, catch the illuminated glacial cliffs on the surface of my eyes. The moon's light is reflected light, but from what source? The sun is a flood that blinds us, a sun we can't see.

**J**anuary 27. The glaciers are rivers, the sky is struck solid, the water is ink, the mountains are lights that go on and off. Sometimes I lie under my sleeping bag on the couch and recite a line from a Robert Lowell poem: "Any clear thing that blinds us with surprise."

I sleep by a cold window that I've opened a crack. Frigid air streams up the rock hill and smells like minerals. In sleep I hear the crackling sound that krill make underwater. Earlier in the day the chunk of glacier ice I dumped into a glass of water made the same sound.

The ice came from the top of a long tongue that spills out at the head of this fjord, as if it were the bump of a tastebud that had been sliced off, or a part of speech. Now it has melted and looks floury, like an unnecessary word that adds confusion to insight. But when I drink it down, its flavor is bright, almost peppery, bespeaking a clarity of mind I rarely taste but toward which I aspire.

When I lie back in the dark, the pupils of my eyes open.

**M**y Uummannaq friends and I have started a countdown until the day the sun appears. After all, there's nothing else to do. Days pass. I try to distinguish the shadowed





path from the shadowed world but fail. Then it's February.

The real is fragile and inconstant. The unreal is ice that won't melt in the sun. I walk partway up Ummannaq Mountain and look south. The sun's first appearance of the year will occur in three days, but for now the light is fish-colored—a pale, silvery gray, like the pallor between night and day. I try to remember the feel of sun on my face, but the dark mass, the rock body of Nuussuaq Peninsula, drives the sensation away.

In the night there is none of the old terror of the sun going down and never coming up again, the terror that heart patients feel, because the sun is already gone, and I'm alive, and the darkness is a cloak that shelters me. As I walk down the mountain to the town dump, patches of frostbite, like tiny suns, glow on my cheeks. They burn like lamps, and I wonder if, later, they will cast enough light to read by, if they will help me to see.

Later I walk around the room trying to lift the dark cover of night with a flashlight in my hand, as if its fading beam were a shovel. I'm trying to understand how one proceeds from blindness to seeing, from seeing to vision.

In Greenland's early days a young shaman would come to the old *angakkoq* and say, *Takorusuppara*. "I come to you because I desire to see." After purifying himself by fasting and suffering cold and solitude, he would sit on a pair of polar-bear pants beside the old man, hidden from the villagers by a curtain of skin, and in time would receive *qaamaneq*—a light suddenly felt in his body, an inexplicable searchlight that enabled him to see in the dark.

One young shaman told Knud Rasmussen that his first experience of "enlightenment" was a feeling of rising up—literally, up into the air so that he could see through mountains, could see things far away, even blades of grass, and on that great plain he could locate all lost souls.

The next day. I don't know where I am. Wind comes through the walls. Maybe the walls have fallen away and merged with the walls of the galaxy. In this place it seems that there are only undefined distances that grow wider. I pick up a two-week-old *New York Times* science section brought from America, and it confirms this notion. "Space Telescope Reveals 40 Billion More Galaxies," the headline reads. Following the repair of the Hubble Space Telescope, which gives detailed portraits of galaxies far out in space and far back in time, astronomers learned that the universe is at least five times as vast as they had thought and is still expanding. Because of the telescope's power, many fainter galaxies are now being counted for the first time.

From the window I look into indigo space, and indigo space, like an eyeless eye, looks back at me. The thirteenth-century Zen teacher Dogen wrote, "To say that the world is resting on the wheel of space or on the wheel of wind is not the truth of the self or the truth of others. Such a statement is based on a small view. People speak this way because they think that it must be impossible to exist without having a place on which to rest."

THE ICE IN MY GLASS COMES FROM A LONG TONGUE  
AT THE HEAD OF THE FJORD, AS IF IT WERE A TASTEBUD  
THAT HAD BEEN SLICED OFF, OR A PART OF SPEECH

In the harbor, we walk on crystal. Night is a transparency, and ice is the cataract over the eye that won't see. Only the fin-like keels of fishing boats touch water under ice, and the fish look up through their cold lenses at our awkward boots. Beyond the harbor there is still-open water and the fjord is a wrinkled sheath of ink that has lost the word "ice."

Later. Twilight gone to dark. I lie naked, careless, not quite destitute under a full moon on a polar night. Greenlanders thought that the moon and sun were sister and brother who had unknowingly slept together. After they discovered their incest they sailed up to the sky holding torches, and lived in separate houses from then on. In summer only sun, the sister, came out of her house, and in winter only the brother moon came out. Sometimes, though, he had to go away to get animals for the people to eat, which is why, when the new moon came, the people were thankful for the return of its light.

I light two candles and open a bottle of Fitou, a red table wine from a French village I once visited. Strange that I can get it here. The biweekly helicopter from Upernavik, a town 100 miles to the north, comes and goes, its pale headlights wedging a channel of light in dark air: should I run to the heliport and escape, or give up and stay here forever? In the dark there is no middle ground.

Sitting by the window, I must look like a character from an Edward Hopper painting—almost unmoving but not unmoved. Stuck here on this Arctic Alcatraz, I don't know what I'm moved to, except too much drink, and low-fever rage.

I write and drink by candlelight. No leaf, no shadow, no used-up senses finally coming to rest, no lover's post-orgasmic sleep. Only this: a cold room where snow fallen from my boots does not melt and the toilet in the unheated entry of the house stinks because it has not



been emptied for days. It occurs to me that the only shadow I've noticed since last autumn is the wavering one a candle makes, casting its uncertainty upon the wall.

Later in the evening the wind stops and a skin of ice hardens over the water. Groups of villagers come down to the harbor to watch and wait. An old woman standing next to me looks far out over the ice and water and says, "If people go out, they will die. They will fall through the ice and go down to where the sea goddess lives. No one knows about ice anymore."

**F**ebruary 3. Jorge Luis Borges reprimands us for thinking that blind people live in a dark world. Behind his blind eyes, he says, there were always colors. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton, also blind, writes of burning lakes, of inward conflagrations. I tell Ludwig, Ole Jorgen's son, the story of Ulysses and the Cyclops, how in order to escape from the Cyclops, Ulysses and his men sharpened a stick and drove it through the giant's eye, then clung to the underbellies of sheep and were carried out of the cave right past their blinded captor.

The sun is an eye. Its coming means that the boulder rolls away from in front of the cave and we are set free. Yet I'm still night-foundered, still blind so much of the time. I read John Muir's



book *Travels in Alaska*. He writes of a summer day, crossing a glacier: "July 19th. Nearly blind. The light is intolerable and I fear I may be long unfitted for work. I have been lying on my back all day with a snow poultice bound over my eyes. Every object I try to look at seems double."

I'm done with daylight. It reeks of carbonous toast crumbs left behind after breakfast, of the kind of bright decor that hides a congenital blindness to what is real. Today in my house, with no lights, no water, only a view of the

darkness outside from the darkness within, from the unlighted room of the mind and the unheated room of the heart, I know that what is real comes together only in darkness, under the proscenium of night's gaunt hood.

It also occurs to me that the real and the imagined have long since fused here, that it's not the content of experience that is important but the structure of our knowing.

**I**n the next days there is more daylight, three or four hours at least, but not enough to read by—that's become my measuring stick. Tomorrow the sun will peep over the ridge, then disappear. Now I don't want it. I've grown accustomed to the privacy and waywardness of night. In daylight all recognitions turn out to be misconceptions. During one of my many naps I dream that I can hear the sun beating behind the rocky peninsula like an expectant heart.

**F**ebruary 4. Sun Day, Sonntag, Sunday, Solfest. At ten in the morning light heaves up. It's seventeen below zero and the sky over the Nuussuaq Peninsula is a pink lip trembling. The wind is sharp. Ann and Ole Jorgen spread a yellow cloth on the dining-room table for our post-sun feast. In northern Greenland it is still dark. Solfest will not reach Thule for another three weeks.

Here in Uummanaq it is nearly time. Panic sets in. Do the children have mittens, caps, boots on? Gitte, a neighbor, comes by in her pickup to take us all to the topmost viewpoint on the island—her house. Ole Jorgen, Ann, Pipaloq (their two-year-old daughter), Ludwig, and I jump in. At the top we run to the edge of a cliff that looks across roiling fjord waters south toward the mountains. There's a moment of utter breathlessness, then a pale light begins to move into the sky and smears itself from the sharp point of the heart-shaped mountain down into the village. Every object of Arctic clutter momentarily goes from shade to gloss—sleds, harnesses, dogs, drying racks, clotheslines, drying animal skins, cars, baby carriages, empty bottles, gravestones. House by house, the dead windows come alive. The sled dogs stand up and stretch in the sun, shaking all the secrets of winter from their coats.

Eleven forty-seven A.M. Ole Jorgen counts down: five, four, three, two . . . A spray of cloud lifts, lit from below and fired to the color of salmon. From behind the upside-down arch of rock, incandescent daggers spike the sky. In the square notch between two peaks, a tiny crescent of sun appears, throwing flames onto the forehead of morning.

"Look, I can see my shadow!" Ole Jorgen says. His son runs to the wall of the house, af





fectionately touching the elongated body of his father. "That's you, papa!" he says.

Do shadows prove existence? "*Sono io,*" Gitte yells out across the valley as if yodeling. "I am."

For six minutes the sun burns inside the notch like a flame. When it scuttles behind the ridge again, our shadows dwindle to nothingness. I am not I.

Everyone goes inside to eat and drink: *kaffe*, tea, *mitaq* (whale skin with a quarter inch of fat), rye bread, cheese, smoked salmon, and a dark Dansk liqueur that tastes like night. Outside, the sky is still bright and sun pushes west behind the mountain as if behind the back of a giant, almost appearing again in a crack, then going blank again.

We toast Knud Rasmussen, polar explorer and ethnographer extraordinaire; we toast the return of the sun. After all, we're still alive despite our various bouts of cancer, tooth loss, divorce, marriage, childbearing, barrenness, and, in my case, lightning. As I drink down my liqueur, it occurs to me that there are all kinds of blindness and all kinds of seeing, that a dark world is not emblematic of death but of a feral clarity. And so I must wonder: in this sudden flood of sun, have I seen anything?

Afternoon. The pink light is going, not down but up, a rising curtain lifting light across the face of the village, up the long tooth of Uummannaq Mountain, leaving in its wake the old darkness. The diesel-powered lights of town come on as we stumble home. Dogs are fed. An old man chips away at an iceberg, carrying a chunk in his pail to melt for drinking water. The world has returned to its dark normalcy.

Walking back to my perched house, I see that out in the bay a collapsed iceberg holds a tiny lake in its center, a turquoise eye glancing upward. The moon comes up in the east as if it were a sun, and for the second time in one day, the mountains go bright.

Today winter was a burning lake and I watched it catch fire.

Ilulissat. Mid-February. The dogsled trip to Thule has been canceled until next year. Again I land on Elisabeth Jul's doorstep.

"You must go dogsledding at least once while you are here," she says on the phone from the hospital. It's noon and she's already performed surgery, delivered a baby, dispensed condoms. By evening she will have performed an autopsy on a policeman from Sisimuit who committed suicide. "After all," she says, "that's what you came for."

I sleep much of the day. Elisabeth is late



coming home from the hospital, and I ask it it isn't too late to harness the dogs. "Why not?" she asks. "If it's dark, it's dark. Who cares what time it is?"

We put on layers and layers of Arctic clothes—fur over Polartec over down over Polartec—and start catching and harnessing the dogs. They are frantic with delight at the thought of being freed from their chains. One by one, Elisabeth leads them up the hill to the sled, where I am tying a frozen reindeer hide to the frame for us to sit on. She pushes the dogs' heads and legs through nylon harnesses, then ties their long blue lines to the central knot near the front of the sled.

My job is to keep the dogs from running off. "*Nik. Nik. Vinta,*" Elisabeth says. I repeat the commands to stay and sit. She hands me the long reindeer-hide whip, which I shake at the dogs that move. They cower in mock displays of fear. As soon as Elisabeth ties the last dog in, they quiver with expectation. "Better sit on the sled and hang on," I am warned, though I'm not exactly sure what I should hang on to and Elisabeth doesn't say. When her hands touch the sled handles the dogs erupt in a snarling fight, then jerk forward and take off feverishly. She jumps on the back of the sled and we are flying.

Cars come toward us and veer off quickly. The dogs, which are hooked up in the traditional fan-like array, don't step aside for anyone or anything. If pedestrians don't get out of the way, the dogs will go right over them. We turn left at Knud Rasmussen's little red house (now a museum), follow the path to the center of town, fly past the bank, the brottlet (an open-air market), the tourist shop, then leave the harbor behind on the road that goes out to the airport.

"This is called the 'Round the World Loop,'" Elisabeth yells. When she commands the dogs to stop, they stop. There are no reins. Nothing to hang on to. If you fall off the sled and the dogs run off, you walk home. We bump up and over a lip of plowed snow and follow a trail into the mountains.

In Rasmussen's day, sled runners were made of walrus bone covered with reindeer hides. Now they are metal and emit sparks as we scrape over rock. The sky clears. I think of Milton's line from *Paradise Lost*: "No light, but rather darkness visible." Away from the all-night lights of Ilulissat, we can see the stars and guide ourselves by them. "I wish you had a cabin out here and we never had to go back," I tell Elisabeth.

The ground is uneven—rock and snow and ice and more rock. When the dogs come to the top of a ridge they know to stop so that Elisabeth can get off the sled and look over to find a

safe route down. As they tire, their speed is more negotiable—they settle into a steady trot. I try to jump off the moving sled and stand, all in one movement, but fail and roll in a ball through the snow, laughing. I run to catch up with the sled, grabbing the handle to pull myself closer, then Elisabeth jumps on and rests while I "drive," though the truth is the sled is dragging me as I pump my legs on uneven ground in heavy oversize Arctic boots.

Finally we stop to let the dogs rest. Elisabeth's face and hair is frosted white and her round cheeks are bright red. It's twenty degrees below zero but we're almost hot—Elisabeth wears neither gloves nor hat. "I only do that when it's really cold," she says. The dogs sleep curled in little knots—white and pale yellow on snow. The Big Dipper is laying its ladle down on our heads and we know we're headed north.

When we start off again, Elisabeth jumps on the sled and crouches behind me, her arm around my shoulder to keep from falling off. In that moment I experience an extraordinary sense of well-being. Bundled into polar rotundity, linked and crouching, we fly from abyss to abyss. We look up: the northern lights flare, hard spotlights focused on dark nebulae and nothingness. They expand and contract like white laces being pulled tight and extending so far up into the sky that they appear to be holding the universe together.

**D**arkness reconciles all time and disparity. It is a kind of rapture in which life is no longer lived brokenly. In it we are seers with no eyes. The polar night is one-flavored, equanimous, without past or future. It is the smooth medium of present-time, of time beyond time, a river that flows between dreaming and waking. Behind the dogs, in the streaming wake of their flatulence, we move over white ground fast. The ground is alive like a torrent, a wild cataract. Which one is moving?

"I'm still not sure where we are," Elisabeth says, "but we're not lost. It's impossible to be lost. That would mean we were nowhere." We cross ridges, slide down icy slopes, zing over snowless patches, striking rock into sparks as if our sled runners were trying to light our way. But the moon does that, and anyway, seeing in the dark is no longer a difficulty.

To our disappointment, the lights of Ilulissat flare up ahead of the team. "Let's not go home," I plead. But we have to. We bump over a plowed cornice of snow and hit the road near the airport that leads back into town. On ice the sled fishtails, wagging with a kind of unspoken happiness, and as the dogs go faster and faster, I am swept forward over the glass eye of the earth into the full sun of darkness. ■



# THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

After the Berkeley fire, an architectural disaster

By David L. Kirp

**S**tanding in the fourth-story tower of his startling new home, his untamed beard flying off in every direction, psychotherapist Michael Lesser resembles an Old Testament prophet looking out over the Promised Land. His house is one of nearly three thousand built over the last five years in the hills of Berkeley and Oakland, California, not as part of a planned development but rather one by one, on three square miles reduced to ashes in October 1991 by one of the most destructive wildfires in the nation's history.

The fire raged for three days. Before it leveled the pine and eucalyptus trees, thick foliage blocked all but the minutest of views from what was then the Lessers' home. Now the vista is almost unimpeded, and Michael Lesser finds himself pleased by the distant and ennobling sight of San Francisco Bay. "It was

God," he said during one of my many visits to these charred hills, "who gave us a magnificent 360-degree view."

The new houses vary from near-duplicates of those destroyed in the fire to insistently postmodern residences intended for glossy display in the architecture magazines. The Lessers'

house was designed by noted Bay Area architect Stanley Saitowitz. Like all of Saitowitz's buildings, it is meant to make a statement, and in this, at least, it succeeds. Most of the Lessers' neighbors liken the massive gunship-gray building to a motel. The more whimsically minded see a submarine encased in stucco, run aground on a sloping suburban lot.

All the windows in the Lessers' house are positioned to prevent the eye from gazing downward at the tangle of weeds and debris



THE SAXOPHONE HOUSE

*David L. Kirp is Professor of Public Policy at the University of California-Berkeley, and co-author, with John P. Dueser and Larry A. Rosenthal, of Our Town: Race, Housing, and the Soul of Suburbia. His own house was one of forty-five obliterated in a 1995 wildfire.*



that chokes the rest of their property. The view instead is entirely upward, east toward a treeless landscape of cracked foundations, tall grasses, and fire-twisted ruins. The middle distance is filled with architectural contraptions risen crazily from the ashes, their variegated roofs (flat and mansard, bowed and peaked) overshadowed, a bit farther up the hillside, by the immense backsides of the boxy new constructions commonly called "monster houses."

The sight startles everyone who encounters it for the first time. It's as if, after the eruption

lands that fan out from the university campus west to San Francisco Bay suffer the deprivations that beset every American city. Crowded with modest workingman's bungalows built half a century ago, the flats are social light-years removed from the serene hills on the city's southeastern corner, where the average house sells for half a million dollars and the views reach as far as the Golden Gate Bridge.

The October 1991 fire did not reach the flats. It was the hills, covered with 1,800 acres of brush and scrub, parched by six years of drought, that burned. Winds blew at thirty-five



A POST-FIRE VIEW FROM THE OAKLAND HILLS

of Vesuvius, Pompeii had reinvented itself as Las Vegas. I came to these ominous hills last summer in hopes of understanding how this happened—how so many seemingly well-intentioned people, most of them possessed of large sums of insurance money and the aspiration to do well for themselves by doing good, could make such a shambles of what was once a lovely hillside.

**T**he inferno of 1991 is the most literal, but not the only, trial by fire through which Berkeley has passed. Berkeley is among the best-known cities of a hundred thousand souls anywhere on the planet, and certainly the most willfully controversial. Its university is world-class; its cultural offerings rival those of cities fifty times its size; its street-theater politics, although muted in recent years, play two standard deviations to the left of Democratic Party orthodoxy; and its capacity to embrace the artistic avant-garde is legendary. The city trades on this reputation, writing and rewriting advertisements for itself as "the conscience of the white Western world" and "the intellectual epicenter of the United States."

Berkeley's professed radicalism makes it a refuge for the mad and the visionary alike, for Nobel Prize laureates and lawyers who have seen the transcendent light. Despite this, it remains a socially divided community where geography recapitulates demography. The flat-

miles an hour; tree branches shot flames like spears across two major freeways and a reservoir. During the three days that the fire raged out of control, 3,354 single-family homes and 456 apartments situated along the hilly ridge of Berkeley and Oakland were destroyed. One hundred and fifty people were seriously injured. Twenty-five were killed. So complete was the devastation that observers invoked the image of bomb-blasted, smoldering Dresden.

For a few short months after the fire, the residents of the Berkeley hills behaved in an exemplary manner. Those who had lost their houses insisted on being called survivors, not victims, and the distinction wasn't merely semantic. They would return, they said, hardy pioneers determined to make this charred desert bloom again.\*

An impromptu meeting at nearby Montclair Presbyterian Church, held just two days after homeowners were allowed back into the burn zone, attracted a crowd of nearly two hundred, anxious for news of their neighbors. At the next meeting, a week later, six hundred people

\* The Berkeley fire survivors saw themselves in noble contrast to more materialistic California disaster victims. During a 1993 inferno in Malibu, a local paper carried a story about two intrepid matrons who piled their jewels and dogs into kayaks and set out to sea, where they were rescued by bronzed and heroic lifeguards. Lost in the celebratory telling was the news that the women had abandoned their Hispanic maids.



turned up, accompanied by a bevy of TV news trucks. A newly invented newspaper, the *Phoenix Journal*, supplied badly needed information as well as tales of heroism, a platform from which to promote the survivors' cause, and a billboard for merchants eager to tempt these affluent homeless with everything from stress-relieving chiropractic to Turkish kilims.

People who had been burned out of their homes painted ceramic tiles to memorialize what they had lost: Grandma's fine china and the grand piano that went up in flames, the tabby cat that had gone missing, "the squirrels who used our telephone lines as a highway." A ten-year-old's tile contained just a single word: "Why?" The tiles, two thousand in all, were joined together in a mosaic 9 feet high and 104 feet long, a memorial, displayed at the BART station on College Avenue, whose message carries an emotional punch akin to the AIDS quilt.

Many of these new refugees saw their loss in almost mystical terms. Barely three weeks after the fire, Deirdre English, a onetime editor of *Mother Jones*, published an essay in a local weekly, the *East Bay Express*, describing how she had "floated above the smoldering ruins in a state of effortless Zen detachment." The firestorm had swooped down upon her house, obliging her to flee for her life, abandoning every material possession as well as the manuscript of a book in progress.

At first, she recalled, those material losses felt liberating, part of a new awareness that "attachment to things is a futile denial of death." But Zen masters live hardscrabble lives, and the East Bay hills weren't filled with the sound of one hand clapping. Very quickly, Deirdre English sensed in herself the temptation to "start denying death all over again from the starting line: by madly consuming." In this she was not alone.

A sexual division of labor asserted itself among the refugees. While the women mostly concentrated on keeping their families intact amid all the uncertainties—finding places to live and clothing to wear, swapping sorrows in emotional support groups—the men set out to engineer a new public order. They organized self-help groups, about fifty in all, known as Phoenix neighborhood associations. These newly minted activists weren't interested in reviving the barn-raising tradition of an earlier West, summoning the unscathed to pitch in and rebuild what their neighbors had lost. Instead, they conceived their mission as one of persuading state and federal politicians to amend the

tax codes and so rescue the former residents from the calamity of having to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in capital-gains taxes.

When the refugees turned to local public agencies for emergency relief, they offered their suffering as proof of their worth and courage. They said, in effect, "We've been through hell.

## ONE RESIDENT PUBLISHED AN ESSAY DESCRIBING HOW SHE HAD "FLOATED ABOVE THE SMOLDERING RUINS IN A STATE OF EFFORTLESS ZEN DETACHMENT"

Now we deserve all the help you can give us." But because California cities are routinely bankrupt, some of the demands could be accommodated only by subtracting services from the residents of the flatlands.

In a city as racially segregated as Oakland, where the fire did its worst work, the fire survivors' plaint reawakened long-abiding hostilities between the less-affluent majority who lived in the flats and those who lived in the hills. In a letter to the *Oakland Tribune*, flatlander Joyce Owens-Smith insisted that she wouldn't pay "for people in the hills to have a clean, safe environment while I and the other poor, minority people live in squalor, abandoned by the same government and corporate entities making this audacious request."

Such thinking wasn't well received at the higher elevations. "We've paid for *their* police protection and fire protection long enough," the prevailing argument went. "Now it's *our* turn." A group of hillside residents proposed seceding



THE AFTERMATH OF THE BLAZE



from Oakland and founding a new city named Tuscany. Oakland, it was said, was famous only for "baseball scores and murder counts."

Flatlands residents recalled the scant attention paid by government officials to the people made homeless by the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, and they remembered bitterly that in 1978 the precincts in Oakland that voted for Proposition 13, the initiative forcing California's cities to cut property taxes, were situated in the hills. Now these same landowners were appealing to the municipality they'd helped to bankrupt, asking and receiving help from a city

mates. The insurance companies responded by pointing to a handful of rapacious residents who claimed they'd lost possessions, even entire floors of houses, that in fact had never existed.

Many homeowners discovered after the fire that they carried woefully inadequate coverage—one policyholders' group named itself the Unexpectedly Underinsured Allstate Policyholders—but by drawing on the force of their unified, well-connected voice, as well as on the support of the state's populist insurance commissioner, they wrung an astonishing concession from their insurers. Policies were upgraded

retroactively, boosting the amount a homeowner could recover by an average of \$200,000.

As Deirdre English learned the lessons of the disembodied spirit taught by the old Japanese Zen masters translated with remarkable ease into the Zen of insurance settlements: "Just when the fire experience is encouraging you to detach from worldly possessions, purify your intentions, and all that," she wrote, "the realpolitik of your insurance policy rises up to inflame pride, greed, guilt, and every other unenlightened emotion you can think of."

"Experience the guilt," she counseled her fellow refugees—but still "fight for your price."

Once in receipt of their insurance settlements, most residents stopped participating in the Phoenix neighborhood associations. Some householder who had been leaders in their

insurance groups cut their own backroom deals agreeing not to reveal the terms of their settlement to anyone else in their own group. As the checks began to roll in, the neighborhood associations collapsed, and the residents turned their attention toward rebuilding what they had lost.

On the slopes untouched by the fire, the Berkeley and Oakland hills look the way they did generations ago: pleasant homes, many in the Arts and Crafts style that defined progressive architecture in the early years of the century, situated amid informal gardens, framed by sycamores and eucalyptuses grown grand with age, on winding streets that encourage the sense of neighborliness.



CONSTRUCTION IN THE OAKLAND HILLS

with a reputation for shabby public services. The bitterness of the flatlanders was ignored. Retired Admiral Robert Toney, president of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, told the *Montclairian*, a local paper, that the refugees were "a very desirable part of the population," leaving the flatlanders wondering just how the admiral regarded their presence.

To the insurance companies the homeowners presented a united front, banding together, in groups with acronyms like FIRE and MIFFED, to negotiate bigger settlements. Insurance claims ran to \$1.6 billion, nearly half a million dollars for each household. Property owners complained that claims adjusters were lowballing them, discounting their damage esti-



That landscape didn't come about by lucky accident. It was the realization of a philosophy about how houses, and entire neighborhoods, should be designed—a philosophy clearly set forth in a slim volume, published in 1904 and titled *The Simple Home*, by a young Berkeley poet named Charles Keeler, who propounded what was for the time and place a radically different vision of home, a “simpler, a truer, a more vital art expression.” During the early decades of the century, this craftsman's ethos emerged in the designs of a new generation of Berkeley architects, among them Bernard Maybeck and Julia Morgan.

Eight weeks after the fire of 1991, the residents of the hills, with the assistance of local architects, published their own book, *Community Voices*, that laid out their “sense of the larger landscape.” By and large the new plans matched Keeler's old metaphysical blueprint. Although the citizens suggested modest improvements—sidewalks in some neighborhoods, more attractive street lighting in others—they placed their emphasis on restoring, in spirit if not in specifics, what had been consumed in the fire.

What *wasn't* wanted had a specific name: Blackhawk. In that gated community twenty miles to the east, beyond the hills, homes, which cost an average of \$600,000, run upwards of four thousand square feet. Their architecture tends toward the ersatz, and they are arranged with an eye to golf-course proximity rather than the natural patterns of the landscape. Blackhawk looks like all the Brodingnags rising across America, where new houses keep getting bigger and contemporary means kitsch.

In keeping with their reputation as exemplars of the nation's better self, the Berkeley refugees meant to prove themselves more visionary than the philistines of Blackhawk. Local architects hoped aloud that the onetime homeowners would do for a new generation as Maybeck and Morgan had done in the aftermath of a 1923 inferno, making a poetic correlation in time and space. Their circumstances provided them with a chance seldom available in a country where individually designed homes have become a rarity for middle-class families. Even for the well-to-do, building a new house usually comes down to a matter of choosing one of three or four standardized models in a real estate developer's catalogue. But the princely sums of insurance money that were paid out placed good architecture within reach of people who weren't Fortune 500 CEOs. “Here was an educated crowd,” Berkeley architect Thaddeus Kusmierski told me as we walked through the generously

proportioned rooms of his new home, adapted from the plans of his Maybeck-designed house that had been incinerated. “Here were people with taste as well as money.”

## AFTER THE FIRE, FOUR RESIDENTS IN TEN DECIDED NOT TO RETURN. MANY WHO REBUILT DID SO ONLY IN ORDER TO GET THE BIGGEST POSSIBLE INSURANCE SETTLEMENT

Shortly after the fire, Christopher Alexander, a Berkeley architect and planner whose influential book *A Pattern Language* offers prescriptions for timeless houses and entire cities alike, took up Charles Keeler's turn-of-the-century campaign for simple homes in soul-nurturing neighborhoods. The Berkeley hills had been “an organic and precious thing,” Alexander pointed out in a lengthy radio interview on KPFA-FM in Berkeley. While those “lovely and informal places” had been leveled, the streets themselves, the stairway paths that climbed the hills, the foundations of houses—the vital patterns—all remained intact.

“The idea at every point,” Alexander said, “is to make a thing that has life by adding to and elaborating on its structure.” The right course of action was to design new homes to fit the footprints of the old.

Yet even as Alexander offered his counsel, homeowners were straying off the path of spiritual enlightenment. After the fire, four residents in ten decided not to return, and many who came back did so because they believed that they had to rebuild in order to get the biggest possible insurance settlement. They weren't the kind of clients that architects refer to as “new home people,” the ones who keep notebooks filled with sketches of their fantasy houses and file folders stuffed with articles from *Metropolitan Home*. They were “old home people,” who knew little about architecture and were in no mood to learn. Even though they were nostalgic about the houses they'd lost, the very fact of suffering and loss led them to want—to believe that they were entitled to—more than they'd had. Their specifications, often based on casual conversations with friends or quick perusals of architectural magazines, tended to reflect the thoughtless hodgepodge that goes by the label “contemporary”: Gropius married to Colonial, Palladian windows affixed to medieval turrets.

Hundreds of architects and as many contractors have labored to remake the hillsides over the past five years, and the result is a muddle. Lacking the kind of shared aesthetic



derived from a common culture, unaware of what had gone into the design of the built landscape of the hillsides, many residents equated "better" with bigger and fancier, and their new homes feature four and five bathrooms, three- and four-car garages, double front doors that belong in an expense-account restaurant. The people who built smaller houses, respectful of the historic scale of the neighborhood, found themselves with what appear to be the cabanas of the monster houses that literally overshadow them.

Some architects treated the damaged landscape as a blank page on which to doodle ec-

wings. Surely such a residence was destined for the pages of *Architectural Digest*.

The work of construction, however, forced artistic compromise. The old barbecue, Weingarten's "Grecian ruins," had to be removed when a neighbor's contractor backed into it with a tractor. The three parts of the house were physically joined, collapsing the conceptual stages of post-fire history. The plywood box looks less like an unfinished construction than an ordinary wooden rectangle. While the copper tower remains, it's by no means unique; towers are everywhere in the burn zone, the new design cliché. As seen from the street, the

most distinctive features of David Roth's residence are those wings. It's no longer a house with a story line, but one that looks ready to fly away.

Just a few lots down the street from Roth's house in Oakland, Stanley Saitowitz, the architect responsible for Michael Lesser's submarine run- aground, produced a long

narrow building and dressed it in aluminum squares of silver and gray. Some neighbors call it the Air Stream, and it does resemble those vintage 1950s trailers. To others it's a sardine tin whose lid, a roof that swoops skyward, has come partway off. Around the corner sits a massive steel structure that looks like a Silicon Valley semiconductor plant.

Such buildings would stick out almost anywhere. They're especially noticeable in a neighborhood where most of the residents, older people who have lived there for years, opted to build versions, albeit somewhat bigger, of the pleasant homes they'd occupied before the fire. When an Air Stream house and a winged tower-house suddenly appear, it's as if strangers had crashed their garden party and upset all the furniture.

David Roth wanted his new neighbors to like his house. He showed them the model, hoping they'd be reassured, but its strange shapes only made them angrier. The old residents wanted things to be as they had been with a Swiss-style chalet, circa 1910, reconstructed on the site, not a pyrotechnical folly.

"Never has anyone been quite so rude to me in all my life," said Roth last summer, shaking his head at the memory as we walked through his still-unfinished house. Considering that he makes his living as a lawyer, that's saying a great deal.

**"Boxes," "monster houses," "motels," "houses on steroids," "mushrooms springing up in charcoal," "factories," "trailers," "visual indigestion," "icons of kitschitecture"—there's no end to the catalogue of insults, printable and**

## ONE HOUSE RESEMBLES A SARDINE TIN WHOSE LID HAS COME PARTWAY OFF. AROUND THE CORNER SITS A MASSIVE STEEL STRUCTURE THAT LOOKS LIKE A SEMICONDUCTOR PLANT

centric fantasies. None went about this task more exuberantly than Ace Architects, a local firm that for one fire-zone client radically reconceived a Bernard Maybeck chapel, supplying the original design with acid-washed copper fish scales on its sides and a balcony modeled after a basketball hoop. For another client, a jazz musician, the firm provided a residence painted in Day-Glo colors, with a megachimney that mimics the curved bell of a mammoth saxophone and twin stair towers shaped like trumpets tooting at the sky.

Ace Architects reserved the most daring of its plans—"a house that was really *about* the fire!"—for David Roth, a young attorney with a professed fondness for new ideas and a handsome insurance settlement, part of which had gone to purchasing a level lot with a fine view. Ace partner David Weingarten recognized him as the perfect client for his own incendiary vision.

And what a vision! The shell of a concrete barbecue would remain, "like Grecian ruins," Weingarten told me when I visited his bizarre office building, dubbed the Leviathan, near the Oakland waterfront. The house itself would be made up of three separate buildings, each embodying a different moment in post-fire history: a tower made of copper, which would eventually blacken to take on a charred appearance and thus recall the period immediately after the inferno, when chimneys stood out from the landscape; a rectangle clad in plywood left deliberately rough to symbolize the process of rebuilding; and a stuccoed structure facing the street, looking more or less like a traditional home, though with Pegasus-like



otherwise, appended to these new constructions. An inviting hillside of winding roads, thick foliage, and informal houses has been transformed, at a cost of more than a billion dollars, into the kind of place that nobody supposedly wanted—a variation on the grandiose theme of Blackhawk, the impact of excess only magnified by the denuded landscape.

If any corner of the burn zone should by rights have escaped so dismal a fate, it's the Berkeley neighborhood where Michael Lesser lives with his fire-made 360-degree view. Elsewhere in the hills people reported meeting their neighbors for the first time as they picked through the wreckage, but the families who lived near the intersection of Alvarado and Vicente roads were hardly strangers. They had keys to one another's houses; they gossiped about, and would say they looked out for, one another. Over the years, some of them had become intimate friends. They were drawn together as well by the recognition that they lived in an ecologically fragile place that obliged them to act together as a neighborhood. In 1978 several of these families joined in the purchase of three acres of land in the middle of the neighborhood, preserving a swath of open space as a "sacred place."

The rules for designing new homes established by the Berkeley planning commission after the 1991 fire seemed tailor-made for this little group of neighbors. Berkeley normally requires a public hearing before issuing a building permit, even if no one objects to the plan (a facet of Berkeley-style socialism, life in a world of endless meetings), but in a rush of sympathy for the refugees, this requirement was waived. Residents were made sovereign, given the authority to pass judgment on their neighbors' designs.

The lower stretches of Alvarado Road were untouched by the fire, but as the road makes a wide curve half a mile or so into the hills, the trees and underbrush abruptly disappear. The rambling, three-story stucco house owned by Toni Garrett and her husband, Gene Farb, straddles that border. The firestorm leveled their detached garage, destroyed their landscaping, and tossed burning embers onto their slate roof, but the house itself survived.

Even as construction began all around them, the Farbs put off their own rebuilding. They were busy shoring up their financially troubled business, Whole Earth Access, a chain of stores imbued with the Zen-ish philosophy of Stewart



DAVID ROTH'S HOUSE

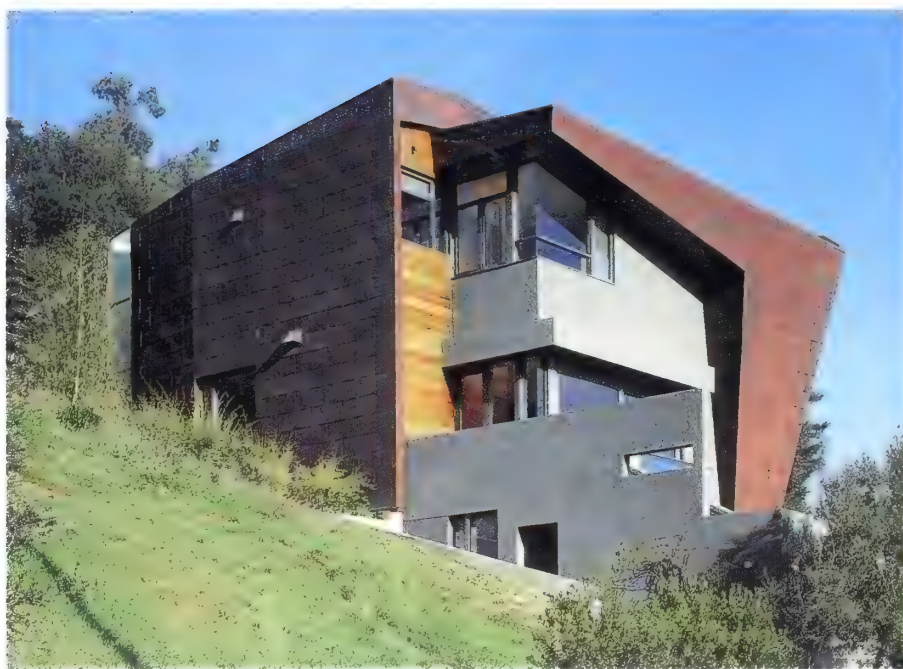
Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog*. Besides, their house was intact, and so they didn't feel the same urgencies as those who had been burned out. Although they had been among the last families to move into the neighborhood, they were glad to serve as nurturers to the newly dispossessed. After the fire, a once and future neighbor was often on the premises, sharing an impromptu meal, swapping notes about children, discussing plans for rebuilding.

It was natural, Toni Garrett told me as we sat in her reinvented garden, that she and her husband would take on "deep feelings for everyone else's losses." In a world suddenly fissured between those whose houses were destroyed and those whose houses still stood, all attention flowed to the victims of fate.

"It was strange, being here when all your friends had lost everything," Toni Garrett said. She felt a little guilty—why me? she wondered—and a little envious as well. "I need a fire," she caught herself thinking. "I need an excuse to start over." Confronted with neighbors' decisions about their new homes that she regarded as mistaken and damaging, she felt silenced, fearful of rebuke. What did she, scarcely singled herself, know about life after fire?



Before the conflagration, the Farbs' comfortable home had been the biggest in the neighborhood. No longer. Across the street the residence of Michael and Deborah Lesser grew, story by story, over two long years of construction, a Berlin Wall shutting off the old from the new. The neighbors mostly despise it, and even architect Stanley Saitowitz has scarcely a good word for the result of his own design. "The idea in the beginning was to build something modest," he said when I spoke with him in his modernist San Francisco office, "but Michael kept wanting to add more—an extra room on the side of the house, a couple of rooms downstairs, places that could be rented out. Though his old house was generic Arts and Crafts, nothing remarkable architecturally, he convinced the insurance company it was



STANLEY SAITOWITZ'S HOUSE

the Parthenon, and so he had the money to do what he wanted."

The Lessers' house is the most obvious but not the only disturbance in the neighborhood. A few doors down on the other side of Vicente Road, where before the fire a rambling 1924 masonry and wood-trimmed home once stood, an outsize stucco and copper-clad ship's prow now looms over the street. Sharon Drager's new residence, 4,500 square feet on three levels, with six bathrooms and a separate suite for the housekeeper, carries the trademark ties of the late, quintessentially L.A. architect Frank Israel, and bears no relation to the northern California terrain.

Drager, a New York emigre, a vascular surgeon, and the mother of two teenagers, saw the building of a house as her one chance to be "patroness of architecture." The media granted her wish: the architectural magazines piled on her living-room coffee table contain an anthology of adulatory articles, chief among them Paul Goldberger's 1995 *New York Times Sunday Magazine* essay, "The Masterpieces They Call Home," which canonizes "the Drager House" as if it were Frank Lloyd Wright's "Fallingwater."

"The house looks like me," Sharon Drager said last summer as we walked from room to room, the walls as deliberately out of plumb as those in a Halloween house of horrors. "It's an edgy house for an edgy owner." Seen in the architectural magazines, the Drager House appears to stand alone, as if in a sculpture garden. But the photographs effectively eliminate the rest of the neighborhood. Across the street there's a standard-issue suburban residence, built on spec by a contractor. Next door another house will soon be built, so close to the Drager home that the distinctive side view of Frank Israel's design—the one celebrated in the architecture magazines—will disappear.

**W**hen the Farbs had been asked to approve their neighbors' designs for rebuilding, they never once raised an objection. The Lessers' house, across the street, was too big, they felt; the tower on the new Tuscan-style home of their next-door neighbors, the Walrods, too imposing. But those people had suffered enough. Whatever they wanted to do was fine. Yet when it was the Farbs' turn to seek the approval of their neighbors

for their own modest rebuilding of a garage and game room, Michael Lesser vetoed the design. It was bad enough from his point of view that someday the pine trees, planted at the suggestion of a *feng shui* practitioner, would intrude on the Lessers' newly attained view. But it was definitely unacceptable that the Farbs' plans called for a structure six feet higher than the old garage.

Michael Lesser makes a dogged and unpleasant adversary. A few years before the fire, he had complained that his then neighbor had built an extension to his home a few feet beyond the legal setback and demanded, noisily, if fruitlessly, that it be torn down. Lesser's ob-



jections to the Farbs' garage, coming at the last possible moment after nine months of planning, presented a major inconvenience. At first Toni Garrett was "angry enough to slug it out," but after a few weeks of reflection, she and her husband decided that they "weren't inclined to pursue struggles."

Construction was postponed, and the architect went back to the drawing board. Several months and several thousand dollars later, a new design emerged. Toni Garrett wrote to the Lessers, asking them to help defray the added cost, but they never responded, and the Farbs were unwilling to press the matter further. Too much trouble, they believed, too much bad karma. Besides, the Lessers' daughter had grown up with their son. They didn't want adults' arguments to complicate their children's lives.

Not long after the Lessers moved into their new home, Toni Garrett organized a fiftieth-birthday party for Deborah Lesser. She'd settled into her new home, Deborah told her neighbors, even though its austere geometries didn't offer a single quiet corner where late at night she could curl up with a book. She wanted to stay there forever. She'd had a garden before the fire, Deborah reminded her friends, and it was time to start a new one. She'd really appreciate the gift of a tree, something that would grow with the new house, and so the neighbors gave her gift certificates to pay for landscaping.

The months slip into years, and the landscaping still isn't done. The Lessers' property remains unkempt. They can't see the ugliness from their own house, so acutely angled are their windows. But Toni Garrett and Gene Farb see it and recoil every time they look across the street, and so does everyone else who passes by.

When so much that was once neighborly has been commercialized—when even the Welcome Wagon, once a simple gesture of community goodwill, now trades on that goodwill to shill for local merchants—only the terminally naive will be shocked by the turn of events in the Berkeley hills. At the outset, the residents who survived the fire of 1991 believed that they could do better—believed that they could *be* better—than this. "It could have been a real utopia," writer Jeremy Lerner ruefully told me as we walked this misbegotten terrain. But over time they have demonstrated that this aspiration was sheer hubris—that, beyond raiding the public treasury for welfare assistance by another name, the idea of the public interest was

meaningless and civic virtue beyond their lines of sight.

Eighteen months after the firestorm, a local contractor became embroiled in a venomous dispute with four families, refugees from the fire who had rebuilt and now were irate that the \$849,000 house the contractor was building on spec would destroy their views. (In the hills, views affect property values. Local realtors calculate the value of a bay view at \$25,000 per bridge.)

## FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE BERKELEY HILLS WHO SURVIVED THE FIRE, THE IDEA OF PUBLIC INTEREST PROVED MEANINGLESS, AND CIVIC VIRTUE WAS BEYOND THEIR LINES OF SIGHT

"This is more than a legal issue," one resident on his way to the courthouse told a *Phoenix Journal* reporter. "It's a community issue."

"We're living in America," the contractor responded. "I can build what I want."

Fire-damaged people, struggling to take care of themselves after a great loss, have in the process done even greater damage, to themselves as well as to others. "I'm entitled to get everything that's coming to me," the survivors of the fire typically said, and the rest of this thought, although usually left unspoken, was implicit in their deeds. "Neighbors, planners, government officials: don't get in my way while I'm getting what's mine."

Much of what has happened since 1991 bears witness to the triumph of selfishness: immense and ugly structures designed without a care for context or consanguinity, neighbors who coexist amid smoldering resentments, neighborhoods that combine the most outmoded features of the old with the grotesqueries of the new, a twice-scarred hillside, and a polity missing in action. The Phoenix neighborhood groups and their good intentions faded away, as did the secessionist fantasy of a new enclave called Tuscany. People concentrated instead on building up the walls that surround their gated private lives.

Today some houses still stand in a state of perpetual incompleteness, their missing windows and walls mute testimony to the miscalculations of contractors who overbuilt in hopes of making fast and easy money. There are, as well, occupied houses whose unbuilt steps, unlandscaped yards, and unfinished exterior surfaces suggest an insurance settlement not quite rich enough for the blueprints in hand. In the burn zone, although the views are wondrous, "for sale" signs are now more plentiful than trees. ■



# K STREET SC

One lobbyist's attempt to transu

It's just no fun being a foreign lobbyist now that the Cold War is over. Congressional cuts to foreign aid have deprived many of America's former allies in the holy war against Communism of the means to retain the very Beltway lobbyists who press the U.S. government for more aid. In such a disagreeable climate, lobbyists—like attorneys who troll emergency rooms and traffic courts—must drum up business at the scene of a disaster. Hence, just ten days after the U.S. Department of Labor revealed plans to investigate the use of child labor in the Philippines, that country's embassy received this solicitation from Tony Smith of Schmeltzer, Aptaker & Shepard. Although the Washington, D.C., law firm doesn't represent other foreign governments, it is well suited to explaining away the Philippines' use of child labor. Here at home, Schmeltzer, Aptaker & Shepard advises companies fending off unions or accused of exposing workers to toxins.

Note Smith's ingratiating remark about being "surprised to hear" that the Philippines was to be investigated for child labor—as if Smith, who before moving to Washington in early 1996 served as Alaska's commissioner of commerce, had even the vaguest notion about the incidence of child labor in that country. If he had, Smith wouldn't be surprised at all. The government in Manila acknowledges that 3.7 million children work, 2 million of them in hazardous conditions. In garment sweatshops, on sugar plantations, and in the rattan-furniture industry, Filipino kids toil up to eleven hours a day for less than \$3 and are sometimes paid only in food. But while the words "child labor" provoke moral outrage in most, Smith's response is merely Pavlovian: a potential client is in trouble, the scent of money is in the air.

With equal parts candor and oil, Smith makes his case: "This is a major issue for the Clinton Administration" translates to, "You've got a problem that requires my services." Smith knows that few issues disgust American consumers more than child labor, which puts the Philippines in a delicate position. The U.S. provides the country with nearly \$50 million a year in economic aid, only one-tenth of what it received during the Cold War but still making it the third-largest recipient in Asia. The U.S. also buys \$2 billion worth of Filipino goods annually, more than one-third of the country's total exports. Moreover, as a developing nation, the Philippines receives special trade privileges that allow its exports to enter the U.S. tariff-free—privileges that depend on offering workers "internationally recognized rights," including a ban on child labor. Indeed, as Smith penned this letter, the U.S. Trade Representative was deciding whether the growing incidence of child labor, as well as officially sanctioned anti-union activities in government-run export zones, merited stripping the Philippines of its trade status.

VIA FACSIMILE (202) 887-5830

Manuel G. Imson  
Labor Attache  
Embassy of the Philippines  
1600 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Manny:

As we discussed earlier today, I discussed with the State Affairs Company, to redirect the Philippines as a country which is using child labor. Labor had included the Philippines in investigating the use of child labor.

This is a major issue for the Clinton Administration, who is in charge of this particular issue. I have discussed with the State Affairs Company, to redirect the State and Labor.

The first step is to neutralize the issue. Bobby Watson, at State Affairs, is the President's Liaison with the Staff of the Democratic National Convention as a candidate and have excellent connections.

Ken Silverstein is co-editor of *Counterpunch*, a Washington-based investigative newsletter. His last Annotation for *Harper's Magazine*, "Flacking for Despots," appeared in the August 1995 issue.



# DENFREUDE

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the Philippine Government enter into a contract with Schmeltzer,  
of the State Affairs Company to work with the AFL-CIO. We would  
ers in the Administration to reverse the situation. I believe we have  
we engage in a very directed effort to change the dynamics that are  
ated in an inappropriate way.

is, please contact me

Cordially,

Tony Smith

Admire the ease with which Smith tosses out his Beltway connections and suggests his ability to get things done. Here he touts his supposed access to Gare Smith, head of child labor issues at the State Department, whose effort Tony Smith pledges to "redirect." Later, Smith claims that his "excellent relationships" with the AFL-CIO will enable him to "neutralize" the federation's efforts to push the administration to crack down on child labor abroad. But Smith appears to have inflated his standing to impress his would-be client. His relationship with the AFL-CIO (aside from working for a firm that boasts of union busting) seems limited to modest donations the federation made to Smith's unsuccessful 1992 and 1994 congressional campaigns. The lifespan of his loyalty is in keeping with the mores of Washington, where allies are peddled for influence and former contributors can't compete with potential clients. Asked for comment on Smith, an AFL-CIO official said, "Smith doesn't have close ties here. In fact, he has no relationship at all." Touché.

Perhaps recognizing that his credentials are insufficient to land such a client, Smith adds a spinner to his line: P.R. practitioner and chum Bobby Watson, with whom he works on another account, representing commercial fisheries in Alaska. The State Affairs Company, where Watson is a partner, is a public-relations firm that represents domestic as well as foreign clients, including the government of Cambodia, the Democratic National Committee, and Philip Morris. Watson is a former top-level aide to Virginia Senator Charles Robb who resigned after being implicated in a wiretap scandal involving the collection of dirt on Virginia Governor Douglas Wilder, then Robb's No. 1 political enemy. Watson deftly moved from a plea bargain in that case to a job as chief of staff for the DNC, and then on to a lucrative career in P.R. In 1996, *Campaigns and Elections* magazine named him one of the "Rising Stars of American Politics."

According to Smith, the embassy's labor attaché recommended that his government retain Smith and Watson, but two factors are working against the deal: At the time Smith made his pitch, the Philippines was spending \$2.3 million on seven other lobby shops that do everything from touching up the country's human-rights record to seeking a greater U.S. market share for Filipino exports. Perhaps they lobbied on child labor too: three weeks after Smith sent this letter, the U.S. decided to give the Philippines time to improve its record on child labor and renewed its trade privileges. Too bad, Tony—but don't fret. About 250 million children work around the globe, from Kenya to Brazil to India, and as long as U.S. consumers insist on third-world prices and first-world labor practices, the dynamic that caused the Philippines to be treated "in an inappropriate way" will generate an endless supply of clients. Back to the chase!





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NOT A FINAL VERSION



**WILSON'S MAGAZINE** Veteran reporter Gene Lyons explores how the *New York Times* set the precedent for the media's coverage of Whitewater. In a frantic attempt to find the Clintons guilty of something — anything — reporters sacrificed journalistic ethics, spinning Whitewater into a highly politicized scandal. Lyons offers clear and insightful commentary on the Clintons' background in Arkansas politics; the connection between the Clintons and the McIninchs; how a \$1,000 investment became a \$100,000 bonanza; and Senator Al D'Amato's struggle to keep the scandal alive. Lyons's essay on Whitewater appeared in the October 1994 issue of *Harper's*.

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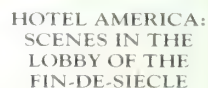


**DISSEMINATION AND PROPAGANDA**  
and the Gulf War—1990

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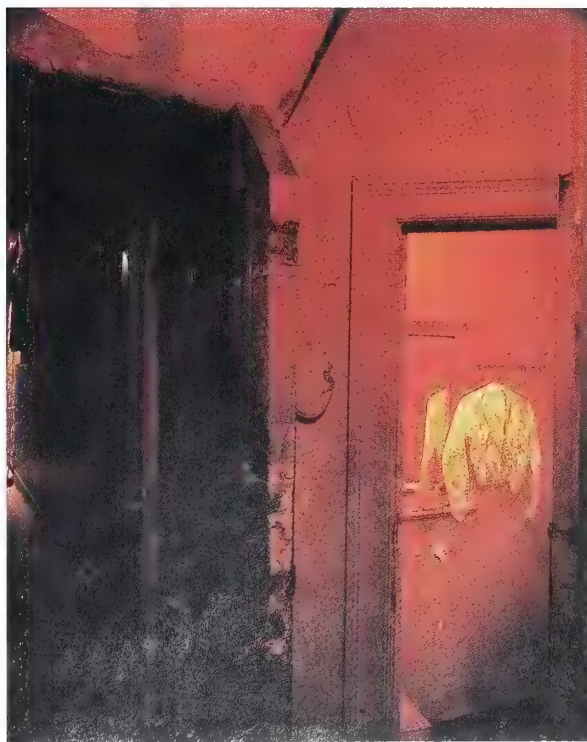


# THE KNIFE THROWER

By Steven Millhauser

When we learned that Hensch, the knife thrower, was stopping in our town for a single performance at eight o'clock on Saturday night, we hesitated, wondering what we felt. Hensch, the knife thrower! Did we feel like clapping our hands for joy, like leaping to our feet and bursting into smiles of anticipation? Or did we, after all, want to tighten our lips and look away with stern, disapproving expressions? That was Hensch for you. For if Hensch was an acknowledged master of his art, that difficult and faintly unsavory art about which we knew very little, it was also true that he bore with him certain disturbing rumors, which we reproached ourselves for having failed to heed sufficiently when they appeared from time to time in the arts section of the Sunday paper.

Hensch, the knife thrower! Of course we knew his name. Everyone knew his name, as one knows the name of a famous chess player or



magician. What we couldn't be sure of was what he actually did. Dimly we recalled that the skill of his throwing had brought him early attention but that it wasn't until he had changed the rules entirely that he was taken up in a serious way. He had stepped boldly, some said recklessly, over a line never before crossed by knife throwers, and had

managed to make a reputation out of a disreputable thing. Some of us seemed to recall reading that in his early carnival days he had wounded an assistant badly; after a six-month retirement he had returned with his new act. It was then that he had introduced into the chaste discipline of knife throwing the idea of the artful wound, the mark of blood that was the mark of the master. We had even heard that among his followers there were many, young women especially, who longed to be wounded by the master and to bear his scar proudly. If rumors of this kind were disturbing to us, if they prevented us from celebrating Hensch's arrival with innocent delight, we nevertheless acknowledged that without such dubious enticements

we'd have been unlikely to attend the performance at all, since the art of knife throwing, for all its apparent danger, is really a tame art, an outmoded art—little more than a quaint old-fashioned amusement in these times of ours. The only knife throwers any of us had ever seen were in the circus sideshow or the carnival ten-in-one, along with the

*Steven Millhauser is the author of Martin Dressler, the Tale of an American Dreamer, which was a National Book Award finalist in Fiction. His last story for Harper's Magazine, "The Sisterhood of Night," appeared in the July 1994 issue.*



fat lady and the human skeleton. It must, we imagined, have galled Hensch to feel himself a freak among freaks; he must have needed a way out. For wasn't he an artist, in his fashion? And so we admired his daring, even as we deplored his method and despised him as a vulgar showman; we questioned the rumors, tried to recall what we knew of him, interrogated ourselves relentlessly. Some of us dreamed of him: a monkey of a man in checked pants and a red hat, a stern officer in glistening boots. The promotional mailings showed only a knife held by a gloved hand. Is it surprising we didn't know what to feel?

At eight o'clock precisely, Hensch walked onto the stage: a brisk unsmiling man in black tails. His entrance surprised us. For although most of us had been seated since half past seven, others were still arriving, moving down the aisles, pushing past half-turned knees into squeaking seats. In fact we were so accustomed to delays for latecomers that an 8:00 performance was understood to mean one that began at 8:10 or even 8:15. As Hensch strode across the stage, a busy no-nonsense man, black-haired and bald-topped, we didn't know whether we admired him for his supreme indifference to our noises of settling in or disliked him for his refusal to countenance the slightest delay. He walked quickly across the stage to a waist-high table on which rested a mahogany box. He wore no gloves. At the opposite corner of the stage, in the rear, a black wooden partition bisected the stage walls. Hensch stepped behind his box and opened it to reveal a glitter of knives. At this moment a woman in a loose-flowing white gown stepped in front of the dark partition. Her pale hair was pulled tightly back and she carried a silver bowl.

While the latecomers among us whispered their way past knees and coats, and slipped guiltily into their

seats, the woman faced us and reached into her bowl. From it she removed a white hoop about the size of a dinner plate. She held it up and turned it from side to side, as if for our inspection, while Hensch lifted from his box half a dozen knives. Then he stepped to the side of the table. He held the six knives fanwise in his left hand, with the blades pointing up. The knives were about a foot long, the blades shaped like elongated diamonds, and as he stood



there at the side of the stage, a man with no expression on his face, a man with nothing to do, Hensch had the vacant and slightly bored look of an overgrown boy holding in one hand an awkward present, waiting patiently for someone to open a door.

With a gentle motion the woman in the white gown tossed the hoop lightly in the air in front of the black wooden partition. Suddenly a knife sank deep into the soft wood, catching the hoop, which hung swinging on the handle. Before we could decide whether or not to applaud, the woman tossed another white hoop. Hensch lifted and threw in a single swift smooth motion, and the second hoop hung swinging from the second knife. After the third hoop rose in

the air and hung suddenly on a knife handle, the woman reached into her bowl and held up for our inspection a smaller hoop, the size of a saucer. Hensch raised a knife and caught the flying hoop cleanly against the wood. She next tossed two small hoops one after the other, which Hensch caught in two swift motions: the first at the top of its trajectory, the second near the middle of the partition.

We watched Hensch as he picked up three more knives and spread them fanwise in his left hand. He stood staring at his assistant with fierce attention, his back straight, his thick hands resting by his side. When she tossed three small hoops, one after the other, we saw his body tighten, we waited for the thunk-thunk-thunk of knives in wood, but he stood immobile, gazing sternly. The hoops struck the floor, bounced slightly, and began rolling like big dropped coins across the stage. Hadn't he liked the throw? We felt like looking away, like pretending we hadn't noticed. Nimble as the assistant gathered the rolling hoops, then assumed her position by the black wall. She seemed to take a deep breath before she tossed again. This time Hensch flung his three knives with extraordinary speed, and suddenly we saw all three hoops

swinging on the partition, the last mere inches from the floor. She motioned grandly toward Hensch, who did not bow; we burst into vigorous applause.

Again the woman in the white gown reached into her bowl, and this time she held up something between her thumb and forefinger that even those of us in the first row could not immediately make out. She stepped forward, and many of us recognized, between her fingers, a orange-and-black butterfly. She returned to the partition and looked at Hensch, who had already chosen his knife. With a gentle tossing gesture she released the butterfly. We burst into applause as the knife drove the butterfly against the wood, where



hose in the front rows could see the wings helplessly beating.

That was something we hadn't seen before, or even imagined we might see, something worth remembering; and as we applauded we tried to recall the knife throwers of our childhood, the smell of sawdust and cotton candy, the glittering woman on the turning wheel.

Now the woman in white removed the knives from the black partition and carried them across the stage to Hensch, who examined each one closely and wiped it with a cloth before returning it to his box.

Abruptly, Hensch strode to the center of the stage and turned to face us. His assistant pushed the table with its box of knives to his side. She left the stage and returned pushing a second table, which she placed at his other side. She stepped away, into half-darkness, while the lights shone directly on Hensch and his tables. We saw him place his left hand palm up on the empty tabletop. With his right hand he removed a knife from the box on the first table. Suddenly, without looking, he tossed the knife straight up into the air. We saw it rise to its rest and come hurtling down. Someone cried out as it struck his palm, but Hensch raised his hand from the table and held it up for us to see, turning it first one way and then the other: the knife had struck between the fingers. Hensch lowered his hand over the knife so that the blade stuck up between his second and third fingers. He tossed three more knives into the air, one after the other: rat-a-tat-tat they struck the table. From the shadows the woman in white stepped forward and tipped the table toward us, so that we could see the four knives sticking between his fingers.

Oh, we admired Hensch, we were taken with the man's fine daring; and yet, as we pounded out our applause, we felt a little restless, a little dissatisfied, as if some unspoken promise had failed to be kept. For hadn't we been a little ashamed of ourselves for attending the performance, hadn't we declared in advance his unsavory antics, is questionable crossing of the line?

As if in answer to our secret impatience, Hensch strode decisively to his corner of the stage. Quickly the pale-haired assistant followed, pushing the table after him. She next

the bareness of her skin, disturbingly unhidden, dangerously white and cool and soft.

Quickly the glittering assistant stepped to the second table at the

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shifted the second table to the back of the stage and returned to the black partition. She stood with her back against it, gazing across the stage at Hensch, her loose white gown hanging from thin shoulder straps that had slipped down to her upper arms. At that moment we felt in our arms and along our backs a first faint flutter of anxious excitement, for there they stood before us, the dark master and the pale maiden, like figures in a dream from which we were trying to awake.

Hensch chose a knife and raised it beside his head with deliberation; we realized that he had worked very quickly before. With a swift sharp drop of his forearm, as if he were chopping a piece of wood, he released the knife. At first we thought he had struck her upper arm, but we saw that the blade had sunk into the wood and lay touching her skin. A second knife struck beside her other upper arm. She began to wriggle both shoulders, as if to free herself from the tickling knives, and only as her loose gown came rippling down did we realize that the knives had cut the shoulder straps. Hensch had us now, he had us. Long-legged and smiling, she stepped from the fallen gown and stood before the black partition in a spangled silver leotard. We thought of tightrope walkers, bareback riders, hot circus tents on blue summer days. The pale yellow hair, the spangled cloth, the pale skin touched here and there with shadow, all this gave her the remote, enclosed look of a work of art, while at the same time it lent her a kind of cool voluptuousness, for the metallic glitter of her costume seemed to draw attention to

back of the stage and removed something from the drawer. She returned to the center of the wooden partition and placed on her head a red apple. The apple was so red and shiny that it looked as if it had been painted with nail polish. We looked at Hensch, who stared at her and held himself very still. In a single motion Hensch lifted and threw. She stepped out from under the red apple stuck in the wood.

From the table she removed a second apple and clenched the stem with her teeth. At the black partition she bent slowly backward until the bright red apple was above her upturned lips. We could see the column of her trachea pressing against the skin of her throat and the knobs of her hips pushing up against the silver spangles. Hensch took careful aim and flung the knife through the heart of the apple.

Next from the table she removed a pair of long white gloves, which she pulled on slowly, turning her wrists, tugging. She held up each tight-gloved hand in turn and wriggled the fingers. At the partition she stood with her arms out and her fingers spread. Hensch looked at her, then raised a knife and threw; it stuck into her fingertip, the middle fingertip of her right hand, pinning her to the black wall.

The woman stared straight ahead. Hensch picked up a clutch of knives and held them fanwise in his left hand. Swiftly he flung nine knives, one after the other, and as they struck her fingertips, one after the other, bottom to top, right-left, right-left, we stirred uncomfortably in our seats. In the sudden silence she stood there with her arms out-



spread and her fingers full of knives, her silver sponges flashing, her white gloves whiter than her pale arms—living as it at any moment her head would drop forward—looking for all the world like a martyr on a cross. Then slowly, gently, she pulled each hand from its glove,

leaving the gloves hanging on the wall.

Now Hensch gave a sharp wave of his fingers, as if to dismiss everything that had gone before, and to our surprise the woman stepped forward to the edge of the stage and addressed us for the first time.

"I must ask you," she said gently, "to be very quiet, because this next act is very dangerous. The master will mark me. Please do not make a sound. We thank you."

She returned to the black partition and simply stood there, her shoulders back, her arms down but pressed against the wood. She gazed steadily at Hensch, who seemed to be studying her; some of us said later that at this moment she gave the impression of a child who was about to be struck in the face, though others felt she looked calm, quite calm.

Hensch chose a knife from his box, held it for a moment, then raised his arm and threw. The knife struck beside her neck. He had missed—had he missed?—and we felt a sharp tug of disappointment, which changed at once to shame, deep shame, for we hadn't come out for blood, only for—well, something else; and as we asked ourselves what we had come for, we were surprised to see her reach up with one hand and pull out the knife. Then we saw, on her neck, the thin red trickle, which ran down to her shoulder; and we understood that her whiteness had been arranged for this moment. Long and loud we applauded, as she bowed and held aloft the glittering knife, assuring us, in that way, that she was wounded but well, or well wounded; and we didn't know whether we were applauding her wellness or her wound, or the touch of the master, who had crossed the line, who had carried us, safely, it appeared, into the realm of forbidden things.

Even as we applauded she turned and left the stage, returning a few moments later in a long black dress with long sleeves and a high collar, which concealed her wound. We imagined the white bandage under the black collar; we imagined other bandages, other wounds, on her hips, her waist, the edges of her breasts. Black against black they stood there, she and he, bound now it seemed in a dark pact, as if she were his twin sister, or as if both were on the same side in a game we were all playing, a game we no longer understood; and indeed she looked older in her black dress, sterner, a schoolmarm or maiden aunt. We were not surprised when she stepped forward to address us again.

"If any of you, in the audience, wish to be marked by the master, to receive the mark of the master, now is the time. Is there anyone?"

We all looked around. A single hand rose hesitantly and was instantly lowered. Another hand went up; then there were other hands, young bodies straining forward, eager; and from the stage the woman in black descended and walked slowly along an aisle, looking closely, considering, until she stopped and pointed: "You." And we knew her, Susan Parker, a high school girl who might have been our daughter, sitting there with her face turned questioning toward the woman, her eyebrows slightly raised, as she pointed to herself; then the faint flush of realization; and as she climbed the steps of the stage we watched her closely, wondering what the dark woman had seen in her to make her be the one, wondering too what she was thinking, Susan Parker, as she followed the dark woman to the wooden partition. She was wearing loose jeans and a tight black short-sleeved sweater; her reddish brown and faintly shiny hair was cut short. Was it for her white skin she had been chosen? or some air of self-possession? We wanted to cry out: sit down! you don't have to do this! but we remained silent, respectful. Hensch stood at his table, watching without expression. It occurred to us that we trusted him at this moment; we clung to him; he was all we had; for if we weren't absolutely sure of

him, then who were we, what of earth were we, who had allowed things to come to such a pass?

The woman led Susan Parker to the wooden partition and arranged her there: back to the wood, shoulders straight. We saw her run her hand gently, as if tenderly, over the girl's short hair, which lifted and fell back in place. Then taking Susan Parker's right hand in hers, she stepped to the girl's right, so that the entire arm was extended against the black partition. She stood holding Susan Parker's raised hand in her gaze, at the girl's face—comforting her, it seemed; and we observed that Susan Parker's arm looked very white between the black sweater and the black dress, against the black wood of the partition. As the women gazed at each other, Hensch lifted a knife and threw. We heard the muffled bang of the blade, heard Susan Parker's sharp little gasp, saw her other hand clench into a fist. Quickly the dark woman stepped in front of her and pulled out the knife; and turning to us she raised Susan Parker's arm and displayed for us a streak of red. Then she reached into a pocket of her black dress and removed a small tin box. From the box came a ball of cotton, a patch of gauze, and a roll of white surgical tape, with which she swiftly bound the wound. "There, dear," we heard her say. "You were very brave." We watched Susan Parker walk with lowered eyes across the stage, holding her bandaged arm a little away from her body; and as we began to clap, because she was still there, because she had come through, we saw her raise her eyes and give a quick shy smile before lowering her lashes and descending the steps.

Now arms rose, seats creaked, there was a great rustling and whispering among us, for others were eager to be chosen, to be marked by the master, and once again the dark woman stepped forward to speak.

"Thank you, dear. You were very brave, and now you will bear the mark of the master. You will treasure it all your days. But it is a light mark, do you know, a very light mark. The master can mark more deeply, if more deeply. But for that you must show yourself worthy. Some of you



may already be worthy, but I will ask you now to lower your hands, please, for I have with me someone who is ready to be marked. And please, all of you, I ask for your silence."

From the right of the stage stepped forth a young man who might have been fifteen or sixteen. He was dressed in black pants and a black shirt and wore rimless glasses that caught the light. He carried himself with ease, and we saw that he had a kind of lanky and slightly awkward beauty, the beauty, we thought, of a waterbird, a heron. The woman led him to the wooden partition and indicated that he should stand with his back against it. She walked to the table at the rear of the stage and removed an object, which she carried back to the partition. Raising the boy's left arm, so that it was extended straight out against the wall at the level of his shoulder, she lifted the object to his wrist and began fastening it into the wood. It appeared to be a clamp, which held his arm in place at the wrist. She then arranged his hand: palm facing us, fingers together. Stepping away, she looked at him thoughtfully. Then she stepped over to his free side, took his other hand, and held it gently.

The stage lights went dark, then a reddish spotlight shone on Hensch at his box of knives. A second light, white as moonlight, shone on the boy and his extended arm. The other side of the boy remained in darkness.

Even as the performance seemed to taunt us with the promise of danger, of a disturbing turn that should not be permitted, or even imagined, we reminded ourselves that the master had so far done nothing but scratch a bit of skin, that his act was after all public and well traveled, that the boy appeared calm; and though we disapproved of the exaggerated effect of the lighting, the crude melodrama of it all, we secretly admired the skill with which the performance played on our fears. What it was we feared, exactly, we didn't know, couldn't say. But there was the knife thrower bathed in blood light, there was the pale victim manacled to a wall; in the shadows the dark woman; and in the glare of the lighting, in the silence, in the very

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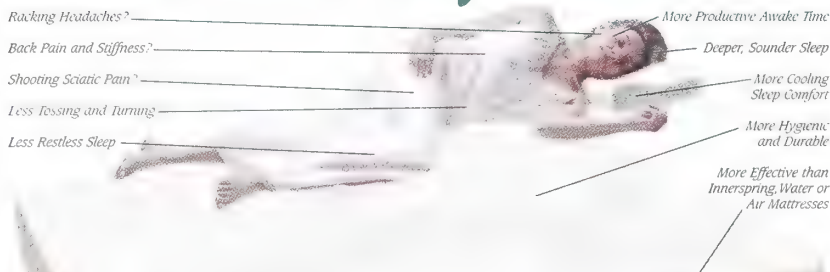


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rhythm of the evening, the promise of entering a dark dream.

And Hensch took up a knife and threw; some heard the sharp gasp of the boy, others a thin cry. In the whiteness of the light we saw the knife handle at the center of his bloody palm. Some said that at the moment the knife struck, the boy's shocked face shone with an intense, almost painful joy. The white light suddenly illuminated the dark woman, who raised his free arm high, as if in triumph; then she quickly set to work pulling out the blade, wrapping the palm in strips of gauze, wiping the boy's drained and sweating face with a cloth, and leading him off the stage with an arm firmly around his waist. No one made a sound. We looked at Hensch, who was gazing after his assistant.

When she came back, alone, she stepped forward to address us, while the stage lights returned to normal.

"You are a brave boy, Thomas. You will not soon forget this day. And now I must say that we have time for only one more event this evening. Many of you here, I know, would like to receive the palm mark, as Thomas did. But I am asking something different now. Is there anyone in this audience tonight who would like to make"—and here she paused, not hesitantly, but as if in emphasis—"the ultimate sacrifice? This is the final mark, the mark that can be received only once. Please think it over carefully before raising your hand."

We wanted her to say more, to explain clearly what it was she meant by those riddling words, which came to us as though whispered in our ears in the dark, words that seemed to mock us even as they eluded us—and we looked about tensely, almost eagerly, as if by the sheer effort of our looking we were asserting our vigilance. We saw no hands, and maybe it was true that at the very center of our relief there was a touch of disappointment, but it was relief nonetheless; and if the entire performance had seemed to be leading toward some overwhelming moment that was no longer to take place, still we had been entertained by our knife thrower, had we not, we had been carried a long way, so that even

as we questioned his cruel art we were ready to offer our applause.

"If there are no hands," she said, looking at us sharply, as if to see what it was we were secretly thinking, while we, as if to avoid her gaze, looked rapidly all about. "Oh: yes! We saw it too, the partly raised hand, which perhaps had always been there, unseen in the half-darkened seats, and we saw the stranger rise and begin to make her way slowly past drawn-in knees and pulled-back coats and half-risen forms. We watched her climb the steps of the stage, a tall mournful-looking girl, jeans and a dark blouse, with long lank hair and slouched shoulders. "And what is your name?" the dark woman said gently, but we could not hear the answer. "Well then, Laura. And so you are prepared to receive the final mark? Then you must be very brave." And turning to us she said, "I must ask you, please, to remain absolutely silent."

She led the girl to the black wooden partition and arranged her there, unconfined: chin up, hands hanging awkwardly at her sides. The dark woman stepped back and appeared to assess her arrangement, after which she crossed to the back of the stage. At this point some of us had confused thoughts of calling out of demanding an explanation, but we didn't know what it was we might be protesting, and in any case the thought of distracting Hensch's throw, of perhaps causing an injury was repellent to us, for we saw that already he had selected a knife. It was a new kind of knife, or so we thought, a longer and thinner knife. And it seemed to us that things were happening too quickly, up there on the stage, for where was the spotlight, where was the drama of a sudden darkening, but Hensch, even as we wondered, did what he always did—he threw his knife. Some of us heard the girl cry out, others were struck by her silence, but what stayed with all of us was the absence of the sound of the knife striking wood. Instead there was a softer sound, a more disturbing sound, a sound almost like silence, and some said the girl looked down, as if in surprise. Others claimed to see in her



face, in the expression of her eyes, a look of rapture. As she fell to the floor the dark woman stepped forward and swept her arm toward the knife thrower, who for the first time turned to acknowledge us. And now he bowed: a deep, slow, graceful bow, the bow of a master, down to his knees. Slowly the dark red curtain began to fall. Overhead the lights came on.

As we left the theater we agreed that it had been a skillful performance, though we couldn't help feeling that the knife thrower had gone too far. He had justified his reputation, of that there could be no question; without ever trying to ingratiate himself with us, he had continually seized our deepest attention. But for all that, we couldn't help feeling that he ought to have found some other way. Of course the final act had probably been a setup, the girl had probably leaped smiling to her feet as soon as the curtain closed, though some of us recalled unpleasant rumors of one kind or another, run-ins with the police, charges and countercharges, a murky business. In any case, we reminded ourselves that she hadn't been coerced in any way, none of them had been coerced in any way. And it was certainly true that a man in Hensch's position had every right to improve his art, to dream up new acts with which to pique curiosity, indeed such advances were absolutely necessary, for without them a knife thrower could never hope to keep himself in the public eye. Like the rest of us, he had to earn his living, which admittedly wasn't easy in times like these. But when all was said and done, when the pros and cons were weighed and every issue carefully considered, we couldn't help feeling that the knife thrower had really gone too far. After all, if such performances were encouraged, if they were even tolerated, what might we expect in the future? Would any of us be safe? The more we thought about it, the more uneasy we became, and in the nights that followed, when we woke from troubling dreams, we remembered the traveling knife thrower with agitation and dismay.



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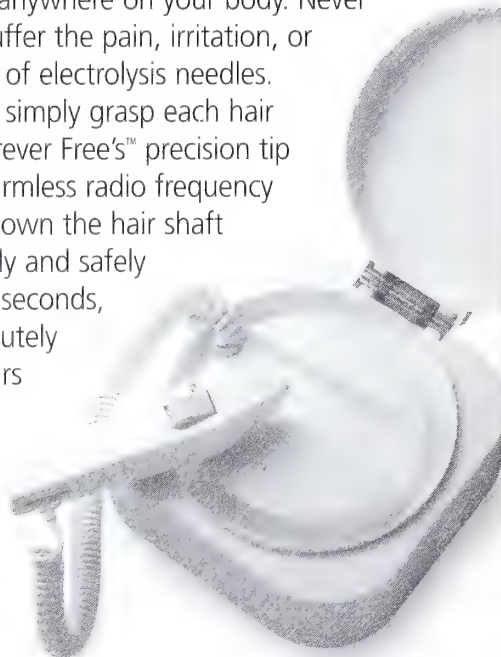
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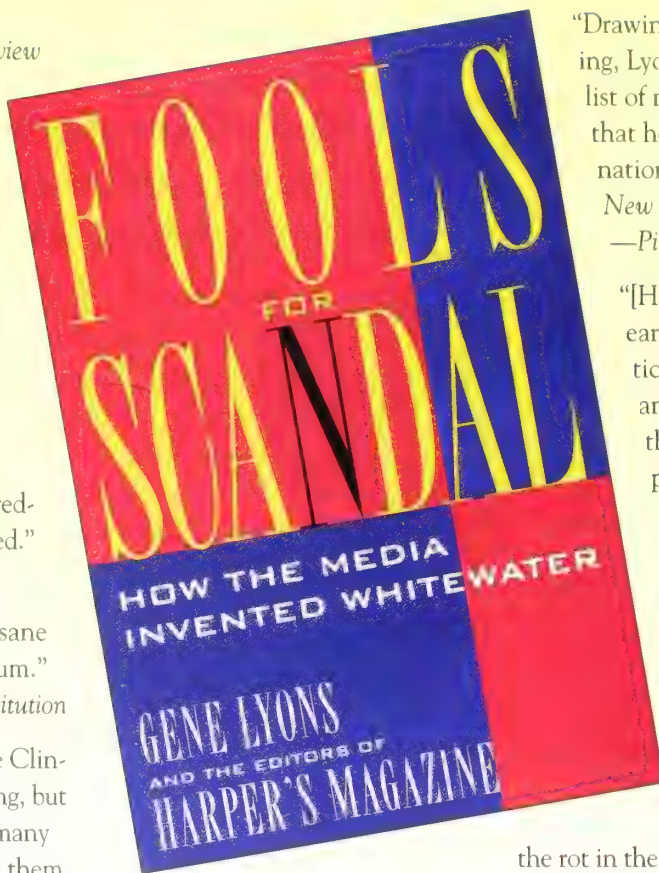
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# SILENCE, PLEASE

The public library as entertainment center

By Sallie Tisdale

When I entered the library as a child, I walked up several imposing steps to a door of respectful size, through a small foyer—and through the looking glass. The librarian's large desk stood guard over the small building, braced by books on three sides. The rooms were close, filled with big, heavy tables that had dictionaries open on reading stands; tall, sweet-smelling, precarious shelves; leather armchairs; rubber-coated wheeled stepstools; and other readers, silent and absorbed. They formed an open maze through which I threaded myself, hour after hour.

This was a place set outside the ordinary day. Its silence—outrageous, magic, unlike any other sound in my life—was a counterpoint to the interior noise in my crowded mind. It

*Sallie Tisdale is a contributing editor of Harper's Magazine and the author of Talk Dirty to Me: An Intimate Philosophy of Sex (1994). Her last article for the magazine, "Never Let the Locals See Your Map," appeared in the September 1995 issue.*



was the only sacred space I knew, intimate and formal at once, hushed, potent. I didn't need to be told this—I *felt* it. In the library I could hunker down in an aisle, seeing only the words in my lap, and a stranger would simply step over me and bend down for his own book with what I now think of as a rare and touching courtesy. That place was then, and remains, the *Library*; what Jorge Luis Borges knew all along was more than that: it was "the Universe (which

others call the Library).” Only outside the door, on the steps, did one take a deep breath, blink at the sudden light, pause to shift the weight of new books in one's arms, and go out again into the world.

I am disabled by this memory. I still show up at ten in the morning at the central branch of the Multnomah County Library, in Portland, Oregon, where I now live, impatient for the doors to open. I always find people ahead of me, waiting on the wide stone steps, and I wait with them, knowing

better. The library I knew, the one I remember, is almost extinct.

In the last few years I have gone to the library to study or browse or look something up, and instead have found myself listening to radios, crying babies, a cappella love songs, puppet shows, juggling demonstrations, CD-ROM games, and cellular telephone calls. ("It's okay, I'm just at the library," I heard a man say recently.) Children run through the few stacks still open to patrons, spin-



ning carts and pulling books off shelves, ignored by parents deep in conversation with one another. A teenager Rollerblades through, playing clack the whip by swinging himself around the ends of the shelves. I browse (with considerably less frequency than a few years ago) to the sound of librarians on the telephone, arguing, calling to one another across the room. Patrons hum along with their earphones, stand in line for the Internet screens, clackety-clack on keyboards. Silence, even a mild sense of repose, is long gone. Today's library is trendy, up-to-date, plugged in, and most definitely not set outside the ordinary day. It's a hip, fun place, the library. You can get movies there and Nintendo games, drink cappuccino and surf cyberspace, go to a gift shop or a cafeteria, rent a sewing machine or a camera. There is a library in a Wichita supermarket and a Cleveland shopping mall. But the way things are going, in a few years it's going to be hard to tell the difference between the library and anything, everything, else.

**A**gain and again, for more than 150 years, the public library has endured a cycle of crisis and change, a continual confusion over purpose. Every few decades the cry has gone up: too few people use libraries, too many people are reluctant to read, intimidated by books, ignorant of all that the library offers. And then a new campaign begins to draw more people into the library, to do more things for larger numbers—to be, in many of these campaigns, all things to all. We're in the midst of one of these campaigns today. The public library of the last decade has been pushed and pulled by professional librarians and by policy makers responsive to the trend of the times. Changing and oftentimes shrinking tax bases, growing populations of immigrants as well as rootless Americans, the Internet and rapidly evolving CD-ROM technology all have had their effects on the public library. Bonds pass; new buildings are built, and old ones are renovated; computer systems are bought and upgraded; collections are sorted, dis-

carded, and replaced; directors are fired and hired—all out of sight of the patrons hurrying in on their lunch hour.

There are almost 9,000 public libraries in the United States, used each year by about two-thirds of the adult population. Both as a physical place in a community and as a symbol of the American cultural aspiration, the library is familiar, mundane, taken largely for granted, perhaps because it is, as government institutions go, remarkably efficient. Public libraries cost about \$19.16 per person annually, and although this expense has increased by more than 90 percent since 1982, it nonetheless accounts for less than one percent of all tax monies. Library money is in a volatile state, up in one region and down in another, new buildings going up and old buildings being remodeled even as branches are being closed, staff reduced, and hours curtailed. Major libraries are being built or remodeled in Cincinnati; Cleveland; Portland, Oregon; Chicago; San Francisco; Los Angeles; Little Rock; Rochester, New York; Charleston, South Carolina; and Oklahoma City. New York City just opened a new Science, Industry, and Business Library. The famously popular Baltimore libraries have had big budget cuts. Last year, the Los Angeles City library system had a policy that would have allowed, with some restrictions, anyone donating a million dollars to have a library named after him or her. There were no takers. The central branch here in Multnomah County is being remodeled at a cost of about \$25 million. Meanwhile, half of the branches are going to be closed for lack of funds.

The argument about what a library is for—what a library is—began its lengthy cultural play with Ben Franklin, more than 200 years ago. When Franklin donated a collection of 116 books to the eponymous town of Franklin, Massachusetts, in 1790, thereby founding the first public library of any sort in the United States, he said that his purpose was to serve “a Society of intelligent respectable Farmers, such as our Country People generally consist of.” The moneyed class, after all, already had private

subscription libraries. Franklin's notion of moderately equal opportunity offended some of the townspeople and it was more than two acrimonious years before the town meeting voted to accept the proposition. It was another forty-three years before the first tax-supported library was founded in New Hampshire, and not until the Boston Public Library opened in 1852 did the library as we know it today begin. Public libraries didn't really multiply until the early twentieth century, when Andrew Carnegie donated \$56 million for the construction of 2,509 library buildings throughout the country.

Franklin hoped reading would improve people's “conversation.” Carnegie saw libraries partly as a means of social improvement for “the best and most aspiring poor.” Chicago librarian William F. Pool, in a massive government report issued in 1876, saw libraries as “the adjunct and supplement of the common school system” and a source of “moral and intellectual improvement” for adults. Michael Harris, then a professor of library science at the University of Kentucky, claimed in 1973 that libraries were consciously intended by the upper classes as tools for the assimilation and Americanization of immigrants, for “disciplining the masses,” who often seemed intent on recreation rather than social uplift. At various times libraries have been said to exist for the active reader, the amateur scholar, the educated citizen, the uneducated citizen, the illiterate poor, the elderly, the schoolchild, and the dime-store-novel lover—all alike and sometimes all at once.

The current trend in libraries is to do away with all that refinement in favor of a more familiar atmosphere. Libraries, I was told recently, used to be “discouraging—discouraging places to work, and discouraging to learn in.” (The woman who said that has retired from library service to do as a technology consultant.) That never felt this way—that I am deeply discouraged by the library today—simply proof, I suppose, that I am out of touch. She meant that librarians were discouraging because they were quiet, because you were expected



behave respectfully toward other readers, because they were, as she put it, "about books."

I have written to my library administration with various suggestions and complaints over the years. Last year I complained about the CD-ROM dinosaur game in my small branch. Two children argued over the game while it played at full volume; my browsing that afternoon was alone to the shrieks of both *T. rex* and the siblings. The deputy director responded to my letter by saying that CD-ROM games are "attractive to children that [sic] are reluctant readers, reluctant library users, and reluctant students. . . . We are pleased that they are enjoying this new way of presenting information." This is a surprisingly quaint emphasis, often tried, often abandoned. Campaigns to increase the number of patrons by offering recreation have failed as surely as attempts to direct them away from popular fiction and toward the classics. "The progressive library is a fisher of men," wrote a librarian in 1909. "And it will catch them whether it baits its hook with books, music, pictures or lectures." Or, later in the century, with social work, concerts, handicraft classes, dances, parties, and athletic meets. Or, as is being tried now, with dinosaur games and the Internet.

Perhaps the Internet is the big secret, the one seduction librarians have sought for centuries. Certainly it's the one form of recreation that seems to draw nonreaders to the library again and again. Wherever Internet connections are offered—and almost half of American public libraries provide them now—they are enormously popular.<sup>1</sup> In a sense the library is made more popular by the addition of Internet stations and CD-

The Internet throws all librarians and patrons back to the arguments made in Franklin, Massachusetts. What does equal access mean on the Internet? Librarians have always exerted control over which books to buy, where to shelve them, how to catalog them, what to keep off open stacks. Should librarians exert any control over which sites are reached on the Internet, and by whom, and for how long? Will libraries buy every Internet address when they've ever bought every book?

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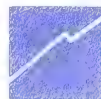
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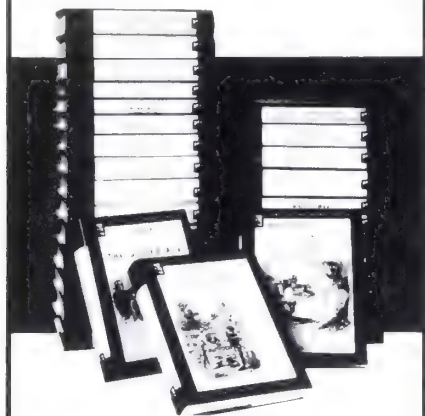
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ROM games. A free showing of *Independence Day* would bring a big surge in attendance, too. But it wouldn't mean that a whole bunch of people had suddenly become library patrons, unless (and this is what I fear) the word "library" has ceased to mean much at all. The Internet/CD-ROM trend becomes essential to libraries only when we want libraries to be changed in an essential way.

In 1978 a committee of the American Library Association released a stirring statement about what the library owed the nation: "All information must be available to all people in all formats purveyed through all communication channels and delivered at all levels of comprehension. . . . All information means all information." This amazing concept didn't simply disappear in a rush of laughter, as one might expect. Its progeny are everywhere: disappearing shelf space replaced by computer terminals, entire book collections thrown out for being archaic, an embrace of every myth about the Internet ever told. A recent story in *Time* describing Microsoft's \$3 million grant to the Brooklyn Public Library for Internet connections makes the insupportable claim that "more knowledge comes down a wire than anyone could ever acquire from books." More data, perhaps, but knowledge? That a journalist could mistake one for the other is telling.

I find today's library literature strangely infatuated, unquestioning, reflecting a kind of data panic, and filled with dire fantasies of patrons left behind—woebegone hitchhikers on the information superhighway. A press release from the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science says that communities without library Internet connections will become "information have-nots." The emblematic image, continually evoked as reason enough, is the "schoolchild doing research," who shouldn't be stuck with stodgy print encyclopedias or forced to browse through the stacks and read books—not when screens and CD-ROMs abound, not when search engines and keywords can do the browsing for her. Says an ALA press release touting the virtues of the electronic resource, "Instead of tracking down

volumes on the shelves, students can press a computer key and read the information they need on the screen, some cases, complete with sound and moving images." Much of the praise for the library as an electronic-information center presumes that we are headed toward an accelerated, saturated vanishing point—and that it is the library's duty to make this as fast as possible, and to make sure everyone is on board. To criticize such an outlook is to be labeled a Luddite, a spoilsport, a stick-in-the-mud.

The reality of the electronic library is painfully obvious to anyone who has noted the national destruction of card catalogs.<sup>2</sup> Almost 90 percent of urban libraries now use electronic catalogs, and many have destroyed their cards, which represent decades of human labor and ingenuity. My library system switched to an electronic catalog in the late 1980s; even now it's not complete. Almost all the cards are gone, and now have to pay ten cents a page for a computer printout.

A few months ago I went to the library to help my daughter get a book about cheetahs. The computers were down. I wasn't surprised—annoyed but not surprised. Repeated "upgrades" have locked patrons out of the catalog for as long as a week, and slowdowns and freezes are common. This time, I asked a librarian to point me toward the section for animals.

"Don't know," he said, and turned to go.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholson Baker, whose persuasive article in the October 14, 1996, issue of *The New Yorker* delineated his deep-seated dislike for the new San Francisco Public Library building, its administrators, and all it and they represent, is now suing the SFPL for access to records documenting the destruction of more than 200,000 books. The library administration claims to have discarded half that number of books, all for legitimate reasons. They also took 50,000 catalog cards with notes written by patrons and made them wall decorations. Ian Shoales wrote last spring that the advent of electronic catalogs seems "as though some overenthusiastic bunch of bureaucratic technophiles came striding purposefully out of a focus group and decided to dump baby, bathwater, towels, and soap out the window. What if they replace them with? Icons of baby, bathwater, towels, and soap." (A good line, though he doesn't mention the fact that he wrote this for Salon, an online magazine.)



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"Can you tell me the classification number for *minids*?" I asked.

"Don't know," he said, more stonily this time.

"Do you have a list of Dewey decimal numbers I can look at?" There were none posted that I could see.

"I'll ring for the reference librarian," he said, and walked away.

I attended all five days of the most recent biannual Public Library Association convention, held in March of 1996 in Portland, Oregon, along with almost 6,000 other people. The PLA is part of the American Library Association, which claims 57,000 members and an annual budget of about \$30 million. This larger body wanted Bill Gates to deliver the keynote address at its own convention this year, but it ended up with Harvard law professor Charles Ogle-tree. The PLA keynote was given by Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America. The theme was "Access for All."

Wandering through the echoing exhibit hall and dozens of panel discussions and lectures broken up by private parties and confabs, I was struck first of all by the amount of time and space devoted to the Internet and its various permutations. There were panels on "Community Information on the Internet," "CD-ROM to Go," "Virtual Communities," "Electronic Document Delivery," "Taking Control of the Internet," and "Internet Job Search," to name but a few.<sup>1</sup> The central theme of the exhibit hall was "The

Future," and that future is not only electronic but expensive. There were larger booths—and many of them—for Internet-server systems costing several thousand dollars each, CD-ROM games and reference sources, a program called Dewey for Windows, periodical-access systems, electronic research programs, and cataloging systems. Just about everyone at every booth handed out business cards listing his or her Web site.

Even in the few discussions focused on books and reading, the interest was largely on genre fiction, and "read-alikes." A "read-alike" is a book "like" another—for the patron who says, "I love Judith Krantz and want to read something like that." In 1922, a few large libraries started readers' adviser services, in which patrons would check in with the adviser for direction and follow prescribed reading lists. It wasn't a very popular program. Today's readers' advisers are staffers familiar with the work of certain popular authors and ready to recommend read-alikes. At one convention booth, I played with a computer program called NoveList, which contains 11,000 plot summaries and "subject access" to 36,000 novels divided by title, genre, and plot. Type in *Carrie* by Stephen King, and NoveList tells you which books have matching "elements"—horror, female adolescents, high school proms, telekinetic murder. Choose a subject—say, "horror, high school seniors"—and a list of titles appears. Describe a plot—"high school senior murders entire class at prom"—and the program tells you if any such book has been written.

Duncan Smith, NoveList's creator and salesman, watched me play. Smith is himself a librarian, soft-spoken and, like almost every salesman at the PLA, carefully and conservatively dressed. "NoveList assumes that frequently people can tell you they've read a book and liked it, but they can't tell you why," he told me. "We don't want the reader to have to do the hard work of figuring that out."

The many disadvantages of electronic reading and learning have been dealt with in detail elsewhere; so have the myriad pragmatic and fi-

nancial problems of a wholesale shift to electronic documentation. One of the most interesting aspects of today's library is how completely those disadvantages are being ignored. Shiny exhibits and chirping screen feed the erroneous belief that electronic delivery is the best form for both information and ideas, and further seduce people into believing that the technology needed to build a truly electronic library is even available now—let alone reliable, affordable, and tested.

Books are expensive objects, but their cost is small when compared with the real costs of electronic "delivery" of the same kind of material. Beyond the original costs of hardware, software, installation and training—and the ongoing costs of replacing all this equipment, given the rapid obsolescence of electronic technology—there are the much higher losses possible with vandalism and theft and the costs of significant staffing changes to be considered. And no one seems to mention the enormous expense—in money, technical services, and natural resources—of printing out the information people want to take home. There are other hidden costs as well, such as the need to train staff to teach patrons how to use these tools, even when staff budgets are being trimmed to pay for the tools in the first place. Even something that seems at first glance to be cost-effective, such as a CD-ROM encyclopedia, has hidden costs. Only one person can use such a source at a time, because the "volumes" are bound together, and an entire computer station must therefore be dedicated to that one person's research.

Once you buy the premise that information—and entertaining information—is the point, you have to buy the equipment, even if it is a Faustian deal. The ALA has accepted another offer from Microsoft: \$100 million to forty-one library systems for Internet access and "multimedia personal computers." An executive with the ALA, in praise of Bill Gates's altruism, says, "Today, access to electronic information is not a luxury—it's a necessity." I have seen

<sup>1</sup> I was especially cynical about the big splashy exhibit put on by IAC, the Information Access Company. IAC sells InfoTrac and SearchBank, systems that allow patrons to print out full-text magazine articles. IAC sells a fair portion of my own work without my permission—in fact, in spite of my "cease-and-desist" letters. My own local library offers patrons copies of dozens of different stories I've written, at ten cents per page; it bought the rights to sell my work from IAC, not from me. When I asked a salesman at the IAC booth about copyrights, he leaned over conspiratorially and said, "Don't worry, we take care of all that." Later, when I attended several panel discussions on electronic document delivery, problems with copyright and piracy went unmentioned.





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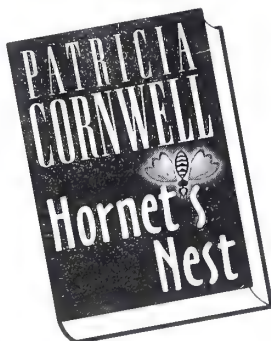
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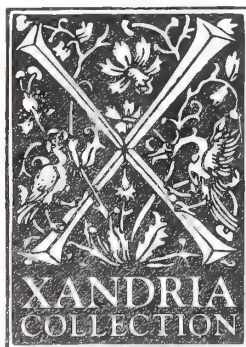
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my own future as a library patron: the expensive new central branch being built here will have hundreds of Internet stations, partly thanks to Microsoft, but it won't have a single quiet reading room.

In their book *Future Libraries: Dreams, Madness & Reality*, Walt Crawford and Michael Gorman call the American library the "museum of failed technology." A recent survey showed that patron use of on-line services was dropping, even as more and more libraries added stations. The result of change for change's sake is obvious in every dusty microfiche reader and discarded box of eight-track tape.

There are, of course, voices of moderation, among them Arthur Curley, director emeritus of the Boston Public Library. He sees a lot of potential in electronic media but remains cautious. "The more limited your budget, the more important it is to acquire materials of lasting value," he told me recently. "I don't think we should be pioneers." Curley thinks the library building itself is an important symbol of the intellectual life. "I know it's a corny term, but it really is a beacon of hope. We want it to be beautiful and inviting; we want it to be a refuge."

**T**he new library is not only electronic; a number of people hope it will be virtual, a "no walls" library, accessible by (and limited to) individual computers scattered throughout a community. We've seen this begin to happen, in workplaces and in a few schools, with entertainment: an isolating intrusion of false connectivity. But it is most alarming in the library, which I have always found one of the most tangible sanctuaries in society. Now it seems more and more something to be used from a distance, a place you don't have to go to—physical contact being, in the words of Kenneth Dowlin, the director of the San Francisco Public Library, a notion "less viable in a networked instant access world." Like a lot of librarians, Dowlin is playing both sides of the issue; he's a leading proponent of the virtual library, but he's also ensconced in a brand-new \$140 million building.

Designed by James Ingo Freed and Cathy Simon, the new San Francisco Public Library building, with its soaring empty spaces, limited book shelving, and computer terminals to spare, has been cited by *Newsweek* and other publications as state-of-the-art, the library of the future. I've only seen photographs, but a friend who visited recently said, in a stunned monotone, "That building was designed by someone who hates books. Who *hates* books."

Perhaps books are an archaic concept in mainstream American culture. Certainly a lower percentage of library budgets is spent on materials now than in 1950, and 40 percent of that is spent on technology, not books. One of the first budget items cut when money gets tight in a library is new acquisitions, and the first books done without are those labeled "assumed or potential use"—books by unknown authors, archaic popular novels and reference materials, obscure historical works, and so on. Dollars are finite, and every library must make choices. Certain libraries, such as the New York and Boston public libraries, because they are relatively well funded, have always been "libraries of last resort," source libraries with the broadest and deepest possible collections. By contrast, a small branch outside Iowa City may largely provide interlibrary loans, community information, and introductory materials. But in both cases, the question of *what a library is for* must be asked. Should libraries be market-driven? Or do they have an intrinsic value that can be held up to the community at large, regardless of profitability and popularity? When such values prevail, books rarely read are seen as books without value. Then libraries must be above all good businesses, anticipating the trends and dumping last year's fashions. Critical acclaim, esoteric detail, revisionism, experimental styles, controversial and unconventional points of view, and, in the end, literary depth itself are regarded as matters of no importance. Library development is meant to happen "just in time, not just in case"—that is, materials are bought

"on demand." The quality of market demand, of course, adheres largely to mainstream tastes, and what the mainstream demands these days: the World Wide Web and Michael Crichton.

Midway through the PLA convention, I had lunch with Charles Robinson, director emeritus of the Baltimore County system, past president of the Public Library Association, and now editor of the *Library Administrator's Digest*. We ate and talked in a noisy, crowded downtown Portland hotel lounge. Robinson was amusing in a self-consciously acerbic way, and he is well rehearsed; he has said the things he said to me many times before.

"My vision of a public library and what it should be doing is based on what the taxpayers want," he said when I asked him what a library is for. "You have to be careful watching what people use libraries for, which can be very different from what people say they use libraries for. The value of a library doesn't depend on how many books it has. It depends on how many books it has that people actually want to use." Robinson castigates librarians who want libraries to be educational. "Most of our use is people getting entertained. While they're being entertained, they are also getting educated. Against their will, maybe."

I told Robinson that I was in the midst of reading through old cookbooks for a project I was working on and that I was having trouble finding the ones I wanted. If he were my librarian, would he have such things around?

"I'm not interested in serving you," he said. "I don't give a damn. Go someplace else. We'll help you find it on interlibrary loan, if we can. But what I want to do is serve 95 percent of the people 90 percent of the time. If I want to serve 95 percent of the people, it'll double my budget."

My own local librarians have told me to seek elsewhere for quiet reading rooms, archaic material, specialized journals, even old cookbooks. Umberto Eco's essay "How to Organize a Public Library," his Ru-



Number 8 is that "The librarian must consider the reader an enemy, a waster of time (otherwise he or she would be at work)." I feel, if not like the enemy, then more and more like an unwelcome foreigner.

One of the several ways I seem to be out of touch with the new library is that I consider "potential use" to be one of the most important aspects of any library—because the things subsumed under that term are often found nowhere else. When I am searching for the odd fact, the little-known detail, the forgotten idea, I am a pilgrim, searching alone. When I am looking without knowing what I am looking for, I am a voyager across my own extraordinary landscape. This is what the library does best: it provides a place where the culture is kept, without judgment or censor, a record of life as it was, is, and may be. And the most important part of that record is what cannot be found anywhere else and will be lost forever if the library doesn't keep it. I see cultural exchanges becoming ever more transitional, frail, unenduring. The public library could, in the face of such change, claim its place as the community's holder of what stays, as an exacting delineation of a thinker's world. Instead, it is close to becoming as frail as what it sells. The widely read novel, the mainstream idea, the ephemeral data of the day are available in lots of places; that's what makes them mainstream. There will be no shortage of Judith Krantz and John Grisham novels in the world, no shortage of screens inviting distraction in a worldwide web of impulsively offered words. But there is, more and more, a threat to unique, anomalous, unconventional knowledge.

I've been reading *Library Journal* and *Public Libraries* and *American Libraries* and other such literature, and talking to librarians off and on for months now, and no one mentions something else I miss very much: *silence*. That is, no one mentions it in a positive way; public-relations stories these days often cite the lack of silence as a good thing. Some librarians now post NO SILENCE PLEASE signs as part of their marketing cam-

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pagans. Number 11 on the ALA list of "12 Ways Libraries Are Good for the Country" is that they "Offer Sanctuary"—"a physical reaction, a feeling of peace, respect, humility, and honor." This, of course, is something no virtual, modem-connected information system can possibly do. Cyberspace hopping may be a solitary activity, but it's a crowded isolation—noisy separation rather than communal quiet.

Toward the end of the PLA convention, I spoke with Jo Ann Pinder, a suburban librarian from Gwinnett County, outside Atlanta. "We don't have a community," she said. "We don't have sidewalks, we have subdivisions. Instead of front porches, we have decks in the backyard. All that brings us together is our churches, our schools, our libraries. What happens when we provide remote access to the library?"

The silence I remember from my childhood library, and still find on occasion in a few big-city reading rooms, is the thick, busy silence one sometimes finds in an operating room. It is profoundly pleasing, profoundly full. There used to be such silences in many places, in open desert and in forests, in meadows and on riverbanks, and something of this kind of silence was common, a century or so ago, even in small towns, broken only by the unhurried sounds of unhurried people. There is no such silence in the world now; in every corner we live smothered by the shrill, growling, strident, piercing racket of crowded, hurried lives. The street is noisy, stores and banks and malls are noisy, classrooms are noisy, virtually every workplace is noisy. National parks and ocean shores and snowy mountains are noisy. And now the library is noisy, which is supposed to be a good thing. It is less "intimidating."

The boundaries that have kept the library a refuge from the street and the marketplace are being deliberately torn down in the name of access and popularity. No one seems to believe that there is a public need for refuge; no one seems to understand that people who can't afford computers and video games can

hardly afford silence. In a world of noise and disordered information, a place of measured thought is the province once again of the wealthy, because it is invaluable.

Call me a curmudgeon. Or a romantic. Certainly my discomfort with the new library resides in the messy, hard-to-measure world of the aesthetic, the subtle, and the private. These are internal passions, as a reader's passions often are. I like a roomful of books, with its promise, its slow breath of mystery, the physical presence of history large and small. I have great faith in reading and in the immense possibilities of stories. And I believe that there is something vital about a community institution devoted to the pursuit of these things. Books and stories connect readers; their use by readers is kinetic and tactile, and readers leave evidence of their passing. But in the electronic world of marching data bits, the trail is purely local, and one's passing leaves no trace. As we slide from one transitional Web site to another, wondering what to believe—or believing everything, not knowing any better—no one bends near, in quiet courtesy.

The public library represents—at least in theory—a truly radical vision of democracy. At its best, it is an amalgam of anarchy and meritocracy. Franklin knew this, 200 years ago. It is, or could be, a huge, commonly held trust, not only of ideas but in one another—a kind of demand we've made on ourselves as a challenge, an expectation that the privilege of ideas, and the silence in which to consider them, will be cared for and exercised, and that exercise will make us strong.

A few weeks ago I found myself in a large, carpeted, book-filled room. People of various colors and ages sat in armchairs, reading; soft classical music played over hidden loudspeakers; a dozen people browsed the nearby shelves. A few children read on the floor. No one spoke; each was lost in a world of carefully chosen words. It was a marvelous place, this Universe, this Library. But I was at Barnes & Noble.



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**MANUAL TYPEWRITING SWM,** 29, SF (25-35) who loves good stories and grammar, who enjoys the fields and mountains of western Massachusetts, and who is grateful to be alive. #1231

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**MORNING PERSON.** Slim, fit, youthful, ISO slim woman who enjoys restaurants, fireplaces, reading, exercise, outdoors, hiking, adventure, simple pleasures... #1233



light undermine any genuine horror we might feel about the situation.

Joseph Skinner  
Santa Fe, N.Mex.

Charles Bowden opens our eyes to what we desperately want to ignore—namely, the poverty, corruption, and violence right on our southern border. He does us a disservice, however, by blaming the lawless tide of murder on free trade and NAFTA. It should be clear to the reasonable observer that the criminal forces spawned by the drug trade are the result of unfree-trade practices. If the market for drugs were legal and regulated, then drug producers, distributors, and retailers couldn't have to shoot one another—they could hire lawyers and file lawsuits like civilized people.

Since the demand for drugs in the U.S. will likely never cease, the only chance for peace in Mexico, Colombia, or, for that matter, the United States lies in the legalization and regulation of drugs. Just as control over the alcohol trade passed from the Al Capones to the accountants with the end of Prohibition, it is reasonable to assume that this same process could occur with marijuana and cocaine.

Those outside the rule of law must pay off the local government and undercut the competition if they wish to stay in business, and this is true throughout North America. In Juárez, where the *narco* traffic is one of the few games in town, the effect is simply multiplied.

James Burke  
Tucson, Ariz. (6 miles from the border)

## Time Left on the Clock

Lewis Lapham's comment in his December 1996 Notebook ["Dies Aeterna"] that "the twentieth century still has three years remaining on the time clock" is in error. The twentieth century has four years remaining—1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000. The twenty-first century begins on January 1, 2001. The title of Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, you see, had various implications.

Robert P. Jones  
Tallahassee, Fla.

## Mail Bashing

Because I had been so moved by Bob Shacochis's essay "Missing Children" [October 1996], I turned eagerly to the letters in the January issue. What I found there was anger and judgment, a microcosm of our society's confused attitudes toward infertility and the quest for a biological family.

Reading the ugly name-calling in some of the letters, I could understand why most people going through this difficult experience remain silent and invisible. One letter snipes, "Does [his wife] have hobbies, interests, friends? Or is she just, as the joke goes, a life-support system for a uterus?" Another connects her decision to pursue a career with her subsequent infertility—as if the non-symptomatic endometriosis she is diagnosed with wouldn't have been present otherwise.

Because the Shacochises have pursued meaningful work that they love, they are called "overachieving yuppies." Because they want desperately to have experiences that come so easily to others, they are called "I-deserve-to-have-it-all baby boomers." We have not come so far, I think, from biblical times, when Elizabeth, believing herself to be barren, said, "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people." (Luke, 1:25)

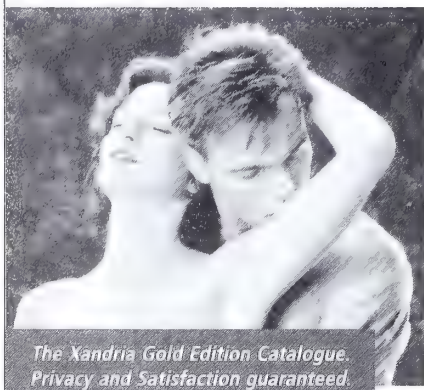
Perhaps the "miracle" of adoption that Sallie Tisdale writes about in her letter is the ultimate answer to the Shacochises' painful journey, but her experience is not theirs, and it is patently unfair for her to judge someone else's suffering in such stark terms: "I have been pregnant; it was interesting, but it had nothing to do with my love for the baby who arrived that way."

It's telling that the one compassionate letter comes from someone who endured the loss of her baby to adoption. She alone seems to understand the hollowness and sorrow implied in the essay's title, "Missing Children."

I am grateful to Shacochis for the painful truth of his essay, and I wish for him and his wife healing and joy.

Leah Ruger  
Belmont, Mass.

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# The Golan Heights

## To Whom Do They Belong? Can Israel Survive Without Them?

Now that Gaza and part of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") have been turned over to the Palestinians, the clamor for peace with Syria becomes ever more strident. Hafez Assad, Syria's president, has left no doubt, and it is generally understood that he will not make peace with Israel unless the Golan is returned to him in its entirety and without any conditions.

### What are the facts?

**Historical Background**—The Golan was always part of the Jewish homeland. The Syrian claim to the Golan is tenuous. Syria, as a political entity, did not exist at all until after the first World War.

Even before the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Syrians subjected the villages in northern Israel to almost daily shellings, making normal life impossible. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Syria attacked Israel and was defeated. Israel occupied the Golan Heights and in 1981, for all practical purposes annexed the area.

**Syria and its President**—Syria is the most destabilizing influence in the Middle East. It is classified by the U.S. State Department as a narcotic-dealing and terrorist state. Its main fury is directed at Israel, which is perceived as a bulwark of Western influence and civilization, both of which Syria totally rejects.

Syria's President, Hafez Assad, is a tyrant, every bit as ruthless as his Iraqi counterpart, Saddam Hussein. Syria is a world center for terrorism. It still harbors Nazi bigwigs, who found welcome there after the World War. Few doubt that Assad was the mastermind in the suicide attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut in which 241 Americans died, and in the explosion of Pan Am flight #103 in which 270 people lost their lives. He oversees one of the largest narcotics operations in the world.

In its keen desire to bring peace to its people, after almost fifty years of war and bloodshed, Israel had been prepared to make far-reaching concessions to Syria on the Golan, in exchange for real peace. But Benjamin Netanyahu, who has promised his people *shalom batuach* (peace with security) is not prepared to give up all of the Golan and to return to the "death trap" borders of 1967 or anything close to them. In order to survive within such borders, Israel would have to rely on the goodwill of the Arab states, most of which—with the recent exception of Jordan and of the cold peace with Egypt—are still in a declared state of war with Israel. An aggressor will attack only if confident of victory. With the Golan in Israeli hands, attacking Arabs could be confident of defeat, and peace would be preserved. To hand the Golan to Syria is a prescription for war and for Israel's destruction.

**Military Security**—The Golan is about the size of Queens, NY. If it were part of Syria it would be less than 1% of its territory. But it is of a supreme strategic importance to Israel. Its high ground provides early-warning capability, without which Israel would be subject to surprise attack by the Syrians. Its loss would obligate Israel to maintain a state of mobilization that would be economically and socially untenable. On the Golan itself, there are only two natural bottlenecks through which tanks can advance. Those choke points are defensible and made possible the repulse of

1400 Syrian tanks that attacked Israel in the 1973 war. But with the Golan in Syrian hands, and without the radar installations that would give Israel warning of any

military movements, thousands of tanks—backed up by missiles and airplanes—could overrun Israel in a matter of hours. The Golan does not make for perfect defense, but it gives Israel a small breathing space for mobilization.

The Golan is the source of over one-third of Israel's fresh water. In 1964, with the Golan in Syrian hands, Syria attempted to divert these headwaters and to cripple Israel's water supply. It is more than likely that, given another opportunity, Syria would once again attempt to destroy Israel's water supply.

"With the Golan in Israeli hands, attacking Arabs could be confident of defeat and peace would be preserved. To hand the Golan to Syria is a prescription for war and for Israel's destruction."

What I like about Harper's Magazine is that it presents provocative new points of view about touchy subjects; what I hate about the Letter section is how predictably each such piece provokes a slew of reflexive protests from the perennially offended. Of course adoptive parents will reproach the Shacochises for the shallowness and whining, and needless to say the PETA people [Letter, January] will make the obligatory impassioned arguments against killing animals for sport ["Man and Bull," Tony Hendra, November 1996].

I'm adopted, and I'm against cruelty to animals, but must everything be made into a moral issue? Must everyone's emotional truth be forced to coincide? Are there no readers left who possess the ability to hold two separate and contradictory ideas in their head at once? A couple who want to have their own child instead of adopting can be selfish and suffering a real and understandable loss. But fighting can be beautiful and cruel. And letter writers can be well-intentioned and self-righteous.

Tim Kreider  
Charlestown, Md.

### March Index Sources

1 Architect of the Capitol (Washington); 2 Library of Congress; 3 Walker Agency (N.Y.C.); 4 Library of Congress; 5 Office of the Attorney General (Trenton, N.J.); 6 Bernalillo County Detention Center (Albuquerque, N.Mex.); 7 Robben Island (South Africa); 8 National Institute of Penitentiaries (Lima, Peru); 9 Donald's Corp. (Oak Brook, Ill.); 10 World Properties Inc. (Washington); 11 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Vienna); 12 U.S. State Department; 13 Gulf War Research Foundation (Washington); 14 EPA; 15 House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight; 16 Coalition on Smoking and Health (Washington); 17 Transparency International-USA (Washington); 18 U.S. Department of Justice; 19 Senate Finance Committee; 20 The Walt Disney Company (Burbank, Calif.); 21 Courtesy Oldsmobile Cadillac Inc. (N.Y.C.); 22 Peter Hart & Associates (Washington); 23 American Bankruptcy Institute (Alexandria, Va.); 24 Office of the State Attorney (Okaloosa County, Fla.); 25 Victoria's Secret (Columbus, Ohio); 26 Whispering Pines Nudist Camp (Shallotte, N.C.); 27 National Basketball Association (N.Y.C.); 28 Frontier Publications (Vashon, Wash.); 29 George Raveling (Los Angeles); 30 Postsecondary Education Opportunity (Iowa City); 31 Law School Admission Council (Philadelphia); 32 Parkinson's Action Network (Santa Rosa, Calif.); 33 Harper's research; 34 Market & Opinion Research International (London); 35 Army & Air Force Exchange (Dallas)/Navy Exchange Service (Virginia Beach, Va.); 36 The Baywatch Production Company (Los Angeles).

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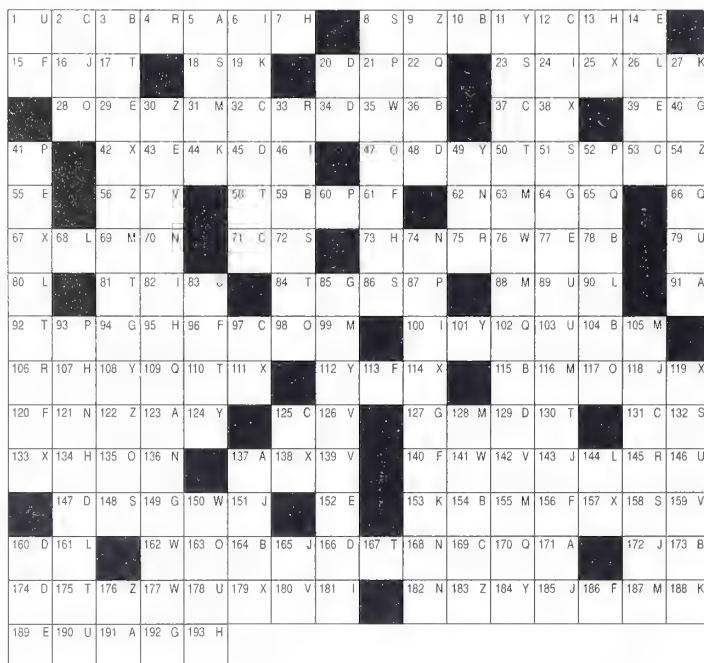
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# DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 171

By Thomas H. Middleton

The diagram, when filled in, will contain a quotation from a published work. The numbered squares in the diagram correspond to the numbered blanks under the WORDS. The WORDS form an acrostic: the first letter of each spells the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken. The letter in the upper right-hand corner of each square indicates the WORD containing the letter to be entered in that square. Contest rules and the solution to last month's puzzle appear on page 73.



## CLUES

## WORDS

A. Development

171 5 123 91 137 191

B. Supervising

173 3 104 115 164 78 59 10  
154 36

C. Rehearsal, recital

97 32 131 2 71 169 37 53  
125 12

D. Basic

160 147 45 48 174 20 34 129  
166

E. Coming to see

77 29 14 43 39 152 189 55

F. Just begun, rudimentary

120 140 186 113 156 15 61 96

G. Distribute, serve (2 wds.)

64 192 94 40 85 149 127

H. Praise, excess approval of

134 193 95 7 73 107 13

I. Deadly

100 181 46 82 6 24

J. Stung; pierced

165 16 185 172 151 118 143

K. Island in the Firth of Clyde

153 44 27 188 19

L. "Kew," says Alfred Noyes, "isn't far from \_\_\_\_" ("Barrel Organ")

144 68 93 161 26 80

M. Overboard, perhaps (3 wds.)

63 155 31 178 116 99 69 152  
105 88

N. "Beauty is a \_\_\_\_.

You can neither eat it nor make flannel out of it." (D. H. Lawrence, "Sex Versus Loveliness")

182 168 62 121 136 74 70

O. Risks

117 98 47 163 28 135

P. Polished

60 21 93 87 41 52

Q. Member of Palestinian sect, 2nd cent. B.C. to 2nd cent. A.D.

22 102 66 109 170 65

R. Gibe, scoff

106 33 4 145 75

S. Cast aside; confused (2 wds.)

148 132 51 18 86 158 72 8  
23

T. Under extremely rotten conditions (3 wds.)

167 130 84 92 17 58 50 110  
175 81

U. Most disordered

178 89 190 1 79 83 146 103

V. Consequence, result

142 126 57 139 159 180

W. Cut very small

177 76 35 150 141 162

X. Winded (3 wds.)

25 157 119 38 47 111 133 114  
179 67 138

Y. Examine

101 124 184 108 11 49 112

Z. Destructive

9 183 122 54 56 176 30



# PUZZLE

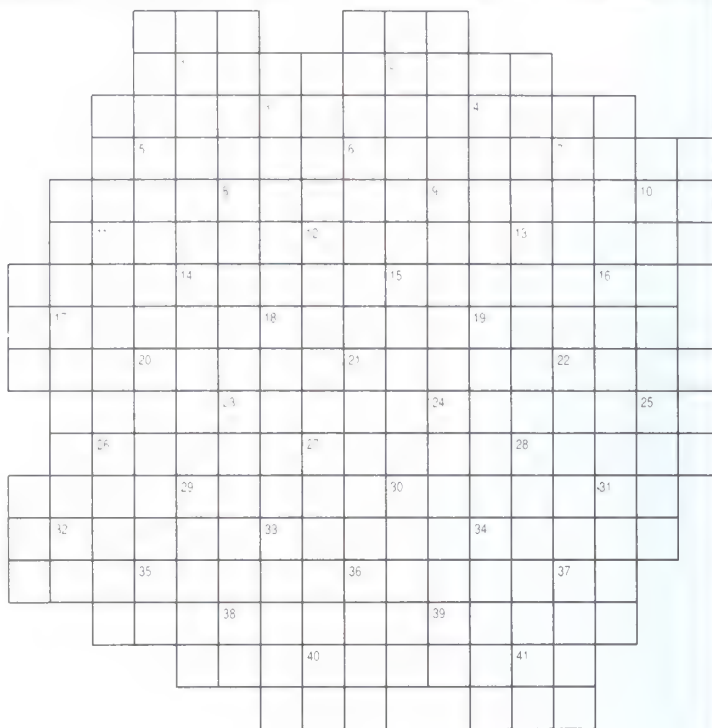
## Dressed to the Nines—III

By Richard E. Maltby Jr.

(with acknowledgments to *Kickstart of The Listener*)

**E**ach numbered square is the center square of a block of nine. Each answer is of nine letters and is to be inserted in its appropriate block, the first letter in the numbered square and the rest around it, in correct sequence, in either direction, starting at any appropriate square. As an extra aid, the six extremest letters on each side may be rearranged to spell NINE RIDES—CARRIES PURE GLEE.

All answers are common words and include one proper name. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 73.



### CLUES

1. Follower's family gets diploma
2. Stand up to watch action of soldiers in back
3. In plays the interviewer tires out stars
4. Lead plank right in a ship
5. Works tin as if weaving—time to go bananas
6. Tired, but when my victory goes to my head, respected
7. Soft hair-styled looks for hypocrites
8. Unrivaled? Without a fight!
9. Intended coming around hospital show time
10. He welcomes you but sounds hostiler!
11. Angelica's buffered aspirin, perhaps
12. Pair returning with no English relation—that's right on the nose!
13. Fool one member of Parliament at the outset—I have, without feeling a thing
14. Abbreviation for science of blood diagrammed
15. In front of flame, it pumps gas, of a sort
16. Just places of interest in a Northern city?
17. He's receiving Series broadcast; they get what's left
18. Screwed-up characters in a Club mean vehicle with an invalid license?
19. Where ringers go to live outside by a river
20. What the upwardly mobile want is a recast rerun!
21. Disliked World League Board type taking a turn
22. He looks back to Iran, his reassignment
23. The telephone people ride Indian property
24. It tells you to go south to danger
25. Eccentric quality of Seurat's paintings?
26. Phrase involving, as a truth, endlessly leading transmission
27. Circling relative to contend with bad odor
28. Noble savage is tougher
29. Hearing doctor's general meaning, circle to look in the front
30. The limits set after developing U.S. three-seater
31. Fuhrer out in girlish disguises, changing his ways?
32. Screams following Puccini's female impersonations
33. Ravishing people fiddle with a different sort!
34. Seethes at badly made-up experts on beauty
35. Maneuvered Liz to go, so she knows about the birds and the bees
36. E.g., a bird resting on a workhorse
37. Doctor, under hats, takes something out of an eye?
38. I'm fashionable, but in the '60s, just died inside and pursued self-sacrifice
39. Reserves our recess for playing
40. Where flowers are broken like a horse, I'm taking things lying down
41. It's crazy being out-of-sight, out-of-hearing, etc.!

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Dressed to the Nines—III," *Harper's Magazine*, 606 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by March 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the May issue. Winners of the January puzzle, "Project Tiles," are Beth Goedickie, Athens, Ohio; Ruth Herbert, Palo Alto, California; and Bernard Scott, Erie, Pennsylvania.



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*By Michael Pollan*



## SHEARS OF THE CENSOR

Notes on Excision, Imprisonment, and Silence

*By William Gass*

## JUDGMENT DAY

In Rwanda, 92,392 Genocide Suspects Await Trial

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## BOYS

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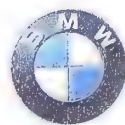




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## LETTERS

### In the Line of Fire

Scott Anderson's "Prisoner of War" [Folio, January], which recounts his experiences as a journalist in some of the world's most dangerous places, is an insult to every professional war correspondent, of course excluding Anderson himself, who has never, as far as I can tell, had a full-time staff job covering war for either a daily or a weekly news organization.

At the time Anderson says he pitched up in Beirut, I was living there as an NBC News staffer. I never heard of him, and I knew everybody who ever walked through the door of the Commodore Hotel, the headquarters of the international press corps in Beirut. There's a huge difference between freelance correspondents and news agency staffers. No sensible person went to Beirut who didn't have to be there in order to get his ticket punched in the world of journalism. A lot of so-called freelancers were marginal characters, more interested in the ambience than the story. Loners with nobody funding them, they bummed rides off us, unencumbered by the guidelines of a major news agency, and did things that were at best foolish and at worst unethical. By the way, whom did Anderson say he was working for in Beirut?

Anderson either needs psychological counseling or has embroidered and lied about what he claims to have seen and "experienced" as a war witness. His article is a masturbatory homage to thrill-seeking that treats war as adolescent sport and justifies watching other people get

blown to bits by heralding the physical risks he himself took in pursuit of his self-proclaimed voyeurism. Take for example, his cavalier description of walking into a field of bones—"killing field," he calls it. As in all his other examples, the focus of his account remains firmly on what he thought and felt at the time. What about the victims? Trust me, in most conflicts correspondents rarely face the same risks as the locals.

Yes, as consumers of war, as bystanders to it, correspondents necessarily exploit war to write a piece or copy or make a broadcast. But if they get an adrenaline rush from having a narrow escape or a close brush with death, most have the decency to stay focused on the *real* victims of the conflict and not on their own stimulation. But for Anderson, the whole point of being there was not the story but the thrill; he writes with the reckless self-absorption of a Russian roulette player who enjoys pulling the trigger and finding the chamber empty.

I had a different reaction when I walked on bones. It was twelve years ago, in a poor Beirut neighborhood after an early-morning car bombing. Forty-five children were blasted across the buildings' facades or left with little red splotches on the blackened pavement. I've never gotten over it. For most war correspondents there is one incident among the many they've seen that they have trouble living with and explaining. There is also anger to be suppressed—anger that the world can be so evil and unjust; the victims, so innocent. Yet war can sometimes be terribly exciting. It calls on deep inner reserves and forces us to face the limits of our own courage and, in some cases, the depths of our cowardice. But for real war correspondents, the blood and

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*Every river makes a journey.*

*Twisting and turning.*

*Flowing down canyons,  
across meadows,  
past cities and towns.*

*Joining with streams  
and creeks and other rivers,  
to eventually end in the sea.*

*A river is a traveler.*

*And as any traveler knows,  
some parts of a trip  
are more memorable than others.*

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guts of it all eventually become too much. The excitement gives way to a sick feeling in the pit of your stomach at night as the scenes come rushing back. It breeds humility and gratitude to be alive—and, often, pledges never to go near a war zone again. War is for the young and the foolish.

Terence Wron  
ABC News  
New York City

Scott Anderson responds:

I've grown accustomed over the years to receiving letters from readers who have taken offense at my conclusions, my focus, my style. Not until Wrong's missive, however, have I encountered a situation in which the disagreement appears almost wholly rooted in a simple lack of reading comprehension. That Wrong is a producer for a major network news program—as well as the self-appointed spokesman for “every professional war correspondent”—can only be disheartening news to those already concerned with the dumbing down of journalism in general, and television journalism in particular.

In unintentionally comic fashion, Wrong insinuates that I am lying either about being in Beirut in 1983—because he “knew everybody who ever walked through the door of the Commodore Hotel”—or about my credentials while there. I thought I made it clear in the article that I went to Beirut in hopes of finding “stringing” work (“although just what ‘stringing’ entailed, I hadn’t a clue”) and that I understood my presence there to be that of a “dilettante” engaged in “tourism.” I guess I didn’t make it clear enough for Wrong.

As Wrong proceeds, his outrage at my purported lapses takes on a frankly weird, echoing quality. “Trust me,” he says, eager to assume the mantle of authority, “in most conflicts correspondents rarely face the same risks as the locals”—a point I explicitly made in the article. “Yes, war can sometimes be terribly exciting,” he writes, and “there is also anger to be suppressed.” Surely even Wrong perceives that it was exactly these two emotions—along, perhaps, with guilt—that were at the heart of what I tried to describe

As for his criticism that my focus remains firmly on what I thought and felt, I can only recommend that he reacquaint himself with the definition of the word “memoir.”

I suspect that Wrong is not nearly so obtuse as he would have us believe, and that the true source of his anger is not over what I said but simply that I said it before he did. He resents the fact that he, a “real” war correspondent, has been made to suffer the indignity of reading the experiences and reflections of a mere freelancer and book writer, someone far outside his fraternity, someone who did not hang out at the Commodore Hotel bar, has never hummed a ride from a TV crew, has never had a support staff, and has never worn one of those snappy little khaki vests so favored by “real” correspondents. For all his quivering indignation at my alleged insensitivity toward the victims of war, it appears that Wrong’s true aim is to engage me in an old-fashioned pissing contest. “My killing field,” he seems to be saying, “is bigger than yours.”

## The Politics of Vitriol

I find it hard to understand why *Harper's* printed Peter Marin's vitriolic article [“An American Yearning,” December 1996], which completely misrepresented both my ideas and the reality of the National Summit on Ethics and Meaning, and then published another distorted attack by a disgruntled former *Tikkun* employee in the March Letters section.

In his letter, Chris Lehmann alleges that I fabricated letters to the editor at *Tikkun*. In my public talks I have often encouraged people who have difficulty writing their ideas to call me with their letter proposals. I have then taken down their ideas over the telephone and turned them into a letter (sometimes pseudonymously). As a result, I managed to broaden the range of *Tikkun's* letters beyond the set of predictable letter writers, and to get powerful criticisms of my editorials and articles printed in the magazine. Lehmann also complains about layoffs at *Tikkun*, and we have recently had to shrink our staff once again. Just try running a magazine that won't print the kind of sensationalist drivel that Marin offered *Harper's*, and you'll see

why it's hard to keep an intellectual magazine financially solvent. Why did *Harper's* decide to use a critique of the summit as an occasion for open season on how *Tikkun* magazine operates? As for Peter Marin, I called Lew Lapham before Marin's article went to press to tell him that, immediately before our summit, I had for the third time rejected a piece submitted to *Tikkun* by Marin, whose pomposity and self-indulgence match his intellectual vacuity.

The Politics of Meaning's summit was a gathering of 1,800 people including some of the most serious intellectuals in the United States who recognize that the right's political success has been, in part, a consequence of liberals and progressives focusing exclusively on economic and political rights while largely ignoring America's ethical and spiritual crisis (which liberals either don't believe is real, because of their too narrow conception of human need or tend to assume must necessarily be addressed only in reactionary ways—a fear that has been substantiated by various communitarian attempts to impose coercion in our personal lives, supposedly in the name of building community).

The summit's discussion focused on how to develop a systematic campaign for a “new bottom line” in the United States that would expand the definition of productivity and efficiency so that institutions would be judged efficient not only to the extent that they maximize wealth and power but also to the extent that they maximize ethical, spiritual, and ecological sensitivity, and enhance people's ability to sustain loving and caring relationships. The Politics of Meaning movement seeks to bring people together in their professional and workplaces to re-envision what their work would be like if this new bottom line existed.

We are also planning a constitutional amendment that would require corporations to apply for reincorporation every twenty years, at which point their record of social responsibility and serving the common good would be evaluated (extending the process now imposed on broadcast corporations, which must show



whether they are serving the community when they reapply for licensure). The amendment would allow community groups to obtain a corporation's charter if they are able to show that they could run the corporation solvently and better serve the common good. Part of the discussion at the summit was about devising an "Ethical Impact Report," which would assess the degree to which corporations have promoted or undermined cooperative and caring values—both in the internal corporate culture and in their advertising, hiring, and investment policies. The summit also began the planning of an Earth Day-style national teach-in on social responsibility and spiritual renewal in 1998 or 1999.

We at *Tikkun* would like to invite *Harper's* to join us in a serious exploration of these issues, to cosponsor the teach-in, and to avoid the personal attacks and haughty, dismissive cynicism that dirtied your pages when you published Marin's article.

Rabbi Michael Lerner  
Berkeley, Calif.

*Peter Marin responds:*

I understand why Michael Lerner feels compelled to defend himself. I do not understand why he has to trash the truth while doing it. The facts (as Lewis Lapham has known from the start) are as follows:

Nearly two years ago, I wrote a long essay for *Harper's*. It dealt, in part, with the effects on left-wing thought of false certainty, moral posturing, and unearned claims to virtue. When it proved too unwieldy for *Harper's*, I sent it to *Tikkun* and *Dissent*. I chose these journals because one can find in their pages the very attitudes I was criticizing. And I let stand in the essay a rather derisive comment about the Politics of Meaning, making clear what I thought of it.

That was what Lerner "rejected"—once, and three and a half months before the summit. He wrote me: "You know I respect you and your thinking. But you act as if you had zero respect for . . . *Tikkun*."

I was neither surprised nor bothered by his rejection. Everything I later wrote about the summit was

grounded in my genuine astonishment at the varieties of nonsense and arrogance I heard there, some of which I carefully reproduced in these pages, word for foolish word.

To suggest otherwise, as Lerner does, is to attack the integrity I prize above all else as a writer and to reveal again the self-serving contempt for the truth that undermines his claims to moral authority. This, rather than anything published by *Harper's*, may explain why his magazine and his movement are languishing.

## Hollow Criticism

In his review of Anthony Julius's book on T. S. Eliot and anti-Semitism ["A Flapping of Scolds," January], Vince Passaro lost me early on when he announced, with the confidence of a baseball pundit citing Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb, that Eliot and Yeats are the two great poets in English since the Romantics—thus ignoring Emily Dickinson, W. H. Auden, and Wallace Stevens, among others. But literature is not quantifi-

*Continued on page 90*

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# NOTEBOOK

## The Spanish armadillo

By Lewis H. Lapham

*Only the wicked walk in circles.*

St. Augustine

Last month in the course of praising the late Bernard DeVoto as both an essayist and a historian, I observed that he enjoyed the luxury of writing for people who still knew how to read (and who placed as high a value on the stores of public memory as they did on the Colorado River or any other natural resource), and, one thought leading to another, I encountered the question of what constitutes history in a semiliterate society beguiled by the joys of forgetfulness. DeVoto died in 1955—before the advent of twenty-four-hour television and without having to ask himself how it might be possible to join the art of literary narrative with the acts of the historical imagination in the floating worlds of timeless fantasy. I came to the end of my monthly space before I could attempt an answer, and so I begin in April where I left off in March, with the two propositions that describe our present cultural circumstance.

A) At least 40 million Americans can be grouped under the heading “functionally illiterate.”

B) The mass desertions from the print to the electronic media show no sign of turning into anything other than a rout.

Neither proposition requires much supporting argument. With respect to the number of illiterate citizens at large in the United States, the official estimate of 40 million seems op-

timistically low. The statistics published by the Department of Education measure the capacity to read road signs and restaurant menus. Complicate the proceedings by one or two degrees of further comprehension (an acquaintance with a minimal number of standard texts, the capacity to recognize the tone of irony), and the number of people impaired by a lack of literary intelligence probably comes nearer to 200 million. The evidence for the higher estimate shows up in proofs as various as the simplification of the vocabulary adjusted to the demands of television news broadcasts (simple verbs, no compound sentences, nouns in one or two syllables, no dependent clauses), the clubfooted prose that disfigures many of the books on the Sunday best-seller lists, the poorly written examination papers pronounced *summa cum laude* at the country's leading universities. Three years ago at Yale I taught a course of English composition and found only four of twelve students in the class capable of writing a well-arranged paragraph—not because they weren't intelligent but because they never had acquired the habit of reading. Familiar with a vast archive of visual images, they easily could recall scenes and fragments of scenes from *Star Wars*, *Melrose Place*, *Late Night with David Letterman*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Masterpiece Theatre*, and *Twin Peaks*, but books were grim tasks instead of pleasant diversions, foreign objects, unfamiliar and vaguely ominous, meant to be studied as if they were cancer cells multiplying under the lens of a microscope or a

jigsaw puzzle constructed from the bones of triceratops.

Similar observations have been made by a great many other people remarking on the progress of American education over the last thirty years, but never more entertainingly than by Richard Lederer in 1987 in the *Maine Sunday Telegram*. A teacher at the Saint Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, Lederer had pieced together a history of the world from sentences then appearing in classrooms (eighth grade to first year of college) across the whole of the United States:

“The inhabitants of ancient Egypt were Mummies. They . . . traveled by Camelot.”

“The Greeks invented three kind of columns—Corinthian, Doric, and Ironic. They also had myths. A myth is a female moth.”

“The government of England was a limited mockery.”

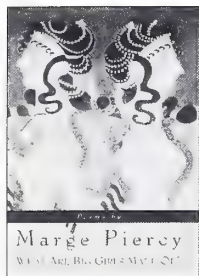
“Sir Francis Drake circumcised the world with a 100-foot clipper.”

“When Elizabeth exposed herself before her troops, they all shouted ‘Hurrah.’ Then her navy went out and defeated the Spanish armadillo.”

The transference of the nation's preferred forms of expression from the idioms of print to those of the electronic media bears out the projection set forth as long ago as 1964 by Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media*. McLuhan began with the premise that content follows form (“We become what we behold,” “We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us”) and so proceeded to an analogy between the nine



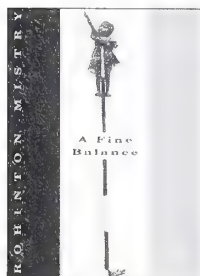
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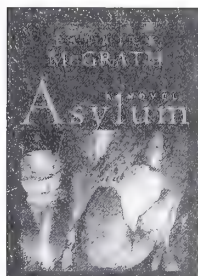
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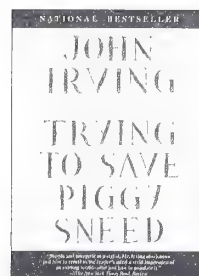


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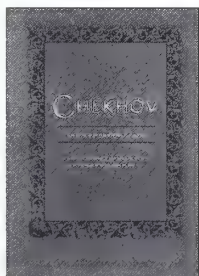
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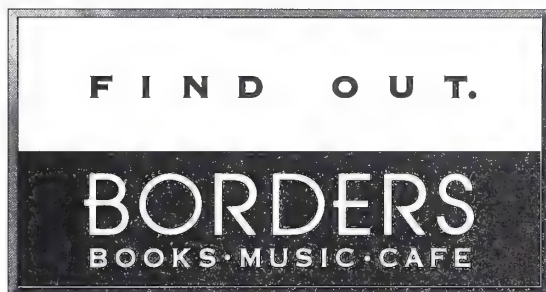


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Schmidt accurately translates Chekhov's entire theatrical canon, retaining the humor while respecting the historical context and social climate.

Publisher Price: \$30.00

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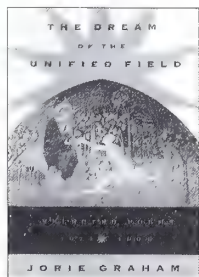


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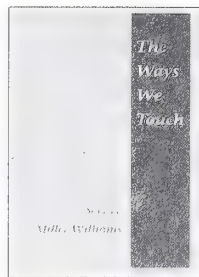
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teenth-century invention of the electric lightbulb and the fifteenth-century invention of movable type. Just as the printing press made possible the overthrow of a settled aesthetic and political order, so also did the practical applications of electricity—as telephone, telegraph, computer, CD-ROM, fiber optics, etc.—give rise to new structures of feeling and thought. The full force of the second epistemological revolution has yet to be fully grasped or acknowledged, but to complain about the events in progress is to stand firmly on the side of the medieval thrones and dominions who railed against Gutenberg's typefaces as the heralds of intellectual anarchy and "the end of civilization as we know it." Our own melancholy inspectors of schools look with equivalent degrees of dismay upon the classical academic curriculum pitted with the rust of film studies, but when I listen to their lament about the desecration of the great books, I don't have much trouble imagining them in a church pulpit exhorting the faithful to go forth and oblige every high school sophomore in El Cerrito, California, to memorize the *Federalist*

*Papers* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

It's easy enough to deplore the differences between Cicero and Howard Stern, but the more interesting questions have to do with what happens next. Is it possible to make an adult language from an alphabet of brightly illustrated children's blocks?

The sensibility shaped by the electronic media over the last forty-odd years has by now acquired a distinctive form—impatient, easily bored, geared to increasingly short bursts of attention, intuitive, musical, tuned to abrupt changes of mood and scene. Most importantly, it is a sensibility bereft of memory. The past is constantly dissolving into the eternal present, and the time is always now, if not on Channel 4 in New York or Los Angeles, then on Channels 27 and 41 in London or Rangoon. Memory is a subject for librarians, but even the best of them cannot keep pace with the accelerated com-

pression of time into smaller and smaller fragments. Look at a movie made thirty years ago and the epic storm at sea lasts for half an hour; now it comes and goes in four minutes. Television commercials that in the 1960s needed two minutes to tell their story have been reduced to fifteen seconds. News documentaries resolve into a sequence of flash cards, and music videos shift back and forth at two-second intervals between as many as four lines of contrapuntal sexual fantasy.

Narrative becomes montage, and the rules of grammar and syntax give way to the arranging of symbolic icons in mosaics like those made from the flashing signs in Times Square. Nothing necessarily follows from anything else. If it so happens that President Clinton's State of the Union Address occupies the same moment in time as the award of the verdict in the O. J. Simpson civil trial, the camera embraces both events without transition or the presumption of cause and effect. The images of power and celebrity signify nothing other than their own transitory glory, and like the moon acting upon the movement of the tides, the divinities of Planet Hollywood (Madonna, Michael Jordan, next week's serial killer, the President of the United States) call forth the collective surges of emotion that rise and fall with as little apparent meaning as the surf breaking on the beach at Santa Monica. Knowledge becomes a matter of instantly recognizing patterns rather than an act of sequential thought. One understands that the United States Senate is not a golf ball, that Liz Claiborne is a dress, and that it wasn't Bill Cosby who killed Nicole Brown Simpson, and the making of these connections (as many as 12,000 of them in the course of an afternoon's shopping and an evening's programming) constitutes the proof of genius and the sum of wisdom.

Closer in character to poetry than prose, the electronic media proceed by analogy and synecdoche—the face of a hungry Rwandan child standing as surrogate for the continent of Africa, a helicopter shot of an Iowa village green expressing the

boundless store of American virtue. The constant viewer learns to accept the images on the screen as metaphors, all of them weightless and without consequence, all of them returning as surely as the sun—reworked and rearranged as other commercials, other press conferences, other football seasons—demanding nothing of the audience except the duty of ritual observance.

Maybe the technology is still too new. Twenty years haven't passed since the general introduction of the personal computer; the World Wide Web has been in place for no more than eight years; even the television networks, despite their mechanical sophistication and longer term of experiment, haven't yet evolved past the stage of complicated toys. Add all the instruments of the electronic media into the orchestra of their high-speed parts, and they can do little more than speak to themselves in rebuses—short words intercut with pictures like those in a third-grade geography book. The language is made for billboards and better suited to selling a product than to expressing a thought. The forms invite development of their implicit poetics—toward the density of the Japanese haiku and the pointillism of Georges Seurat, in the direction of computer games on the order of *Myst* or *Civilization*—but in the excited rush into cyberspace (wiring every circuit to every other circuit, staking claims to anything and everything that can be outfitted as an icon or shipped by satellite to Shanghai) few people have taken the trouble to explore the possibilities. The television and movie canons still drift through too many pointless silences and too much dead air, the voice-overs serving as captions instead of polyphonic counterpoint, and much of the writing on the Internet could as easily be posted in spray paint on the side of a bus.

Much of the current dissatisfaction with the electronic media suggests that their prospective audiences are good deal more perceptive than they are dreamed of in the marketing theory of Time Warner and Fox Television (cf. the diminished network ratings, the improved standing



C-SPAN, the ability of twelve-year-olds to simultaneously listen to Beck, watch *Friends*, and work problems in advanced algebra), and before too long I expect the editors at *Wired* to discover Hermann Hesse's novel *The Glass Bead Game*. Hesse didn't use the term "virtual reality," but he was confronted with the overthrow of a settled aesthetic and political order in the Germany of the 1930s, as well as with the advent of the electronic cultural dispensation in the person of Adolf Hitler. Plotting an escape into a realm of pure symbol and disembodied mind, he imagined a language of abstract signs representative of all the noble thoughts and works of art conceived by the mind of man on the long journey through recorded time. Analogous to the Egyptian hieroglyph and the Chinese ideogram, the vocabulary of the *Glass Bead Game* presents its adepts with an instrument on which, as if on a vast organ of "almost unimaginable perfection," they might play the music of the spheres and render the whole of the intellectual cosmos in forms equivalent to the toccata, pasacaglia, prelude, and fugue. A single glass bead stands for a motif as specific as the diagram of a plant cell, a sentence from Leibniz or the Upanishads, a conjunction of planets in the year 1348, a line from Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, a cross section of the human heart, or the first four bars of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto. The players of the game belong to monastic order in the forests of Castalia (a spiritual province set apart from the kingdoms of politics and economics), and once a year they come together under the direction of the master of the game (the Magister Ludi) to compose, on what Hesse imagines as a musical staff as large as a cathedral wall, the "unio mystica." The audience consists of intellectuals of all ranks, physicists as well as architects and philologists, sufficiently familiar with the symbolism to appreciate the intention of the metaphysical themes and variations.

When I first read the book, I thought of the spectators at a chess tournament, but instead of the crowd in the ballroom of the old Henry Hudson Hotel on West Fifty

seventh Street (inclined to rude commentary and apt to be wearing baseball caps), I imagined dignified figures dressed in clerical robes, building what Hesse called "the hundred-gated cathedral of the Mind" not with bricks and straw but with the symbols for Xanadu and Pico della Mirandola.

Hesse's bead game lends itself so obviously to the transcendental aspirations of the Internet that it's probably only a matter of months before Microsoft buys the right to his name for one of its software programs. The company's marketing strategists might first want to consult Charles Cameron, reachable on the Internet at [hipbone@earthlink.net](mailto:hipbone@earthlink.net), the foremost of 263 correspondents concerned with the implications of Hesse's novel. Meaning to honor the author, not only with a computer game replicating *Das Glasperlenspiel* but also, in the best of all hypothetical worlds, with a digital notation for the music of ideas, Cameron last July posted 6,000 words of text that introduced as many motifs as might be needed for a choral symphony—René Daumal's *Mont Analogue*, Italo Calvino's *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, *Beowulf*, Gregorian chant, Max Brod, Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium," quantum mechanics, the *I Ching*, Babbage's Difference Engine, Timothy Leary, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, and Plinio's *The Role of the Lap Dog in the Lives of Great Courtesans*.

Cameron's posting suggested an answer to the question that I had asked of the absent DeVoto. Maybe in the fullness of compressed time we will evolve a language made from the glyphs and signs of the more familiar popular culture, with the Nike swoosh and Ralph Lauren's polo player, the logos for Coca-Cola, Mercedes-Benz, and the National Football League, with photographs of the white Ford Bronco, Warhol's soup cans, and Marilyn Monroe. The prospect holds a good deal of promise, and next month—with any luck and assuming the reader's continued patience—I'll complete the attempt to find a historical perspective that encompasses Caesar's Gallic Wars as well as the Marlboro Man and the Spanish armadillo. ■

# Michael Pollan



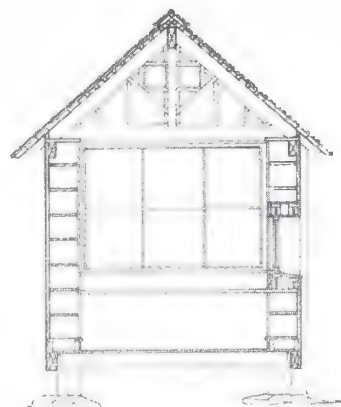
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**ABSOLUT GRAVES.**



# HARPER'S INDEX

- Number of "difficult, detailed" government-program cuts President Clinton says his new budget contains : 238
- Percentage of these his budget director declared too "boring" to list for reporters at a February press conference : 100
- Chances that a U.S. TV was tuned to network coverage of the State of the Union and the Simpson verdict in February : 2 in 7
- Chances that a U.S. TV was tuned to the networks' regular programming during the same time period a week earlier : 2 in 5
- Ratio of *America's Most Wanted* episodes aired since 1988 to the number of profiled criminals arrested since then : 1:1
- Number of states that require fingerprinting of all driver's license applicants : 4
- Number where the population's poorest fifth pays the largest portion of income in sales, property, and income taxes : 40
- Net change in the capital-gains tax rate under Republican presidents since 1960, in percentage points : +7.5
- Net change in the rate under Democratic presidents : -4.5
- Ratio of last year's federal budget to what Americans would earn if paid the minimum wage for watching TV : 1.3:1
- Number of TV sets owned by Martha Stewart : 16
- Number of phone lines connected to her five car phones : 7
- Hours that 3 miles of Nebraska's Route 83 were closed last fall when a truck carrying two nuclear bombs overturned : 2
- Estimated number of Cobra attack helicopters privately owned by Americans : 25
- Value of surplus weapons and equipment one U.S. Air Force base lost track of between 1991 and 1994 : \$39,000,000
- Value of the White House's annual savings on light bills since the installation of energy-efficient bulbs : \$18,850
- Number of years Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary used an electric space heater in her DOE office : 4
- Number of years, according to O'Leary, beyond which only someone "probably certifiable" would head the DOE : 4
- Estimated shift in the angle of the earth's axis since 1950 due to dam-related water redistribution, in centimeters : 60
- Average number of days after U.S. clocks are set forward each spring that the fatal-accident rate declines to normal : 4
- Number of meteors entering the earth's atmosphere each year that are larger than a car : 12
- Chance that an American adult under the age of 54 suffers from mental-health and/or substance-abuse problems : 1 in 3
- Chance that a U.S. oncologist has recommended marijuana use to combat nausea caused by chemotherapy : 1 in 2
- Factor by which marijuana use increases the likelihood of other drug use, according to the president of Phoenix House :  $\infty$
- Factor by which the number of teenagers using marijuana last year exceeded the number arrested for violent crime : 16
- Average grade level at which a Washington, D.C., inmate can read : 5
- Average grade level at which he or she left school : 11
- Chance that a freshman at the Citadel military academy will drop out within a year : 1 in 5
- Percentage of black teenagers who say it is "extremely important" to learn U.S. history and geography in high school : 59
- Percentage of white teenagers who say this : 25
- Number of Texas high school basketball coaches ejected from games last year for "unsporting behavior" : 90
- Ratio of hockey rinks to hospitals in Canada : 3:1
- Estimated percentage change in the size of Canada's Native-American population since 1500 : +22
- Estimated percentage change since then in the size of the Native-American population of the U.S. : -76
- Number of genocide defendants awaiting trial in Rwanda : 92,392
- Number of private lawyers practicing there : 33 (see page 75)
- Total number of pistols Hebron's 400 Palestinian police officers will be provided with this year : 200
- Average number of prayers sent to the Wailing Wall each day via e-mail : 200
- Number of Planet Hollywood franchises to be opened in the Middle East this year : 2
- Distance from the Sphinx's nose to the nearest Kentucky Fried Chicken, in yards : 200

*Figures cited have been adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of February 1997. Sources are listed on page 87.  
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**TEXACO**



# READINGS

[Essay]

## WHEN HOPE AND HISTORY DON'T RHYME

*From "My Grandfather's Walking Stick, or The Pink Lie," by Lore Segal, in the Fall 1996 issue of Social Research, a special issue on "truth-telling, lying, and self-deception." Segal teaches English at Ohio State University.*

When Pandora upended her box of calamities over the earth, there fell out, so says the story, a last straggler: hope.

Hope pities us and lies. It pities our terrors and invites us to tell ourselves that the things we fear happen only to other people. We are a special case. When it comes to us, says hope, calamity will turn aside.

Hope pities our dowdiness. It promises that we will find the treasure, marry the prince, and inherit the kingdom. Hope says that it is our birthright to win the lottery and write a classic novel. If we are American it will be a best-seller. We will make the NBA, be a rock star, become president.

And hope pities our disappointment with the world. It tells us to look forward to the time of the messiah to come, or backward to the paradise that must surely have been. The heart rebels at the truth that what is is it.

Friends to whom I argue that hoping contains an inherent lie disagree violently. The

Oxford English Dictionary explains their reaction: it defines a lie as "a false statement made with the intent to deceive; a criminal falsehood," and goes on to say, "In mod. use, the word is normally a violent expression of moral disapprobation, which in polite conversation tends to be avoided, the synonym *falsehood* or *un-truth* being often substituted as relatively euphemistic."

The OED lists only one other category, our old friend the white lie, and defines it as "a consciously untrue statement which is not considered criminal; a falsehood rendered venial or praiseworthy by its motive."

I wish to advance the pink or rose-colored lie and define it as an *unconsciously* untrue statement never considered blameworthy because it is not considered a falsehood. I want to look at the pink lie in terms of the three aspects of the OED's definition of the lie and the white lie: intentionality, function, and moral reputation.

To take the last first, hope gets universally favorable press. The Twenty-third Psalm ranks it with faith and charity, which is to say, with love.

To address the second, it is true that hope's gentle falsehoods are essential to our progress. It is the dream of an improbably prosperous outcome that initiates, and lets us persevere in, our best and worst ambitions. We need hope to power any action that is not instinctive. What personal, civic, or criminal act would we undertake—who would marry, run for office, plan a heist or an essay, start a polar expedition or a war—without the hope of better success than we have reason and experience to believe plausible?



Doctors tell us that hope assists the process of healing. Perhaps our very instincts abandon us when we stop hoping: I remember the evening, at supper, when my grandmother stopped lifting her fork up to her mouth.

Hope's necessary falsehoods are the tools in our survival kit. They blessedly preserve us from intellectual despair, the sin accounted as the seventh and deadliest because it demon-

strates an absence of faith. Hope's rose-colored falsehoods allow us to deceive ourselves and to participate in the deceptions practiced by our community. Hope ignores the evidence of history and experience; it lies in order to con us out of knowing what we know and into thinking what we wish.

My late husband used to tell the story of a Martian chief who summons his head astronaut and orders an expedition to Earth. The chief is puzzled by an anomaly he has been observing over the aeons: earthlings appear to be born to live for a period of time, after which they die. Now a race, he argues, that knows it is going to die would be incapable of doing what earthlings do day in and day out—get out of bed, dress, go to their jobs, come home, eat their suppers, drink, laugh.

Had the expedition in that story actually taken place, the head astronaut would have brought this explanation home: the human race knows it is mortal but does not believe it. It believes what the serpent told Eve: "You are not going to die."

Curious, the difference in our feelings when the doctor has numbered the years we will live: the difference is not the limited number; the number was always limited. It is the number made actual that disables the lie and forces us to believe what we already know: we will die.

Community systematizes the private lie, and our language backs it. We say "a life has been saved" when we mean a death has been postponed. Usage promises that we merely pass away or, more hopefully, on.

I have a friend who believes in the transmigration of his soul for another round of life that must, surely, make up to him for the unfairness meted out to his industry and talent in this one. And, he argues, life would not punish babies with illness, abuse, or the sufferings of the Holocaust unless they deserved it for what they must have perpetrated in some previous existence. His proof is his heart's certainty that life could not, in both these instances, be as unfair as he knows, from his own observation, that it is. The trick is to locate hope's proof in that place from which no traveler returns to explode the story.

**W**e must, finally, settle the question of intentionality: how, if we believe our lie, can we be said to intend to deceive? Is a statement false when the liar is persuaded of its truth as a matter of faith, for instance, or is it the result of a successful act of self-deception? Or can we ask ourselves the extent to which we choose—to which we give ourselves permission—not to know what we know?

I have a friend who advocates denial as a ser-

[Decree]

## CHINA'S SLOW NEWS DAYS

*From regulations for journalists issued last October by China's Central Propaganda Department. The rules appeared in the December 1996 issue of China Focus, a newsletter published in Princeton, New Jersey.*

**I**n order to guarantee unity of thinking and to avoid a negative impact on political stability, all sensitive issues, such as the campaign to protect the Diaoyu Islands [claimed by Japan] or the overseas democracy movement, are not to be covered.

There have been over 10,000 cases of demonstrations and protests in urban and rural areas within the past year; all of these are not to be covered.

All cases that have a significant impact or involve government officials should not be reported, such as the case of the former secretary of the Beijing Municipal Party Committee, Chen Xitong [ousted in 1995 for corruption], or the case of Zhou Beifang of the Capital Iron and Steel Works [a close ally of Deng Xiaoping who was sentenced to life in prison for bribery].

When reporting on issues concerning Hong Kong, the media must act in accordance with the policy formulated by the party's Central Committee.

When reporting on foreign affairs, the media must not reveal state secrets.

Articles written by dissidents are not to be published.

Propaganda departments must strengthen censorship of the media; those that violate the regulations must be dealt with severely.





"Beauty Salon in Vedado, Havana," by Tria Giovan, from her book *Cuba: The Elusive Island*, published by Harry N. Abrams. Giovan lives in New York City.

viceable method for dealing with truths she would not know how to handle or how to bear. When I offered to join her in grieving over a piece of mortal news affecting a mutual friend, she proposed instead that we disbelieve it together. This is the honest lie. It is more common not to acknowledge up front what it is that we are up to.

In a late essay entitled "The Memory of the Offense," Primo Levi discusses the revision of a too painful past by both victim and perpetrator of that monumental offense we call the Holocaust. "A person who has been wounded tends to block out the memory so as not to renew the pain; the person who has inflicted the wound pushes the memory deep down to be rid of it, to alleviate the feeling of guilt."

It troubles us, as it troubled Levi, that the perpetrator and his victim belong to the same species and operate according to instincts common to both. And our justice judges the identical psychological operations differently: the criminal, wanting to lessen the pain of guilt, revises—reesees—the past and restores himself in his own eyes to the condition of innocence, of not knowing he has committed a crime. It is

not the lie told to others that is his second crime but the lie he has given himself permission to tell himself.

When the sufferers revise their past or present of undeserved pain, they grab on to falsehoods that are venial, that is to say "easily excused or forgiven; pardonable." We wish them Godspeed.

**H**ere, finally, are two rose-colored memories in which the liar is my mother; it is she who caught herself at it, she who tells the story on herself.

The story requires reiteration of the history I keep hoping to have finished telling: Hitler annexed Austria in March 1938. In December my father got me included in a transport of 500 Jewish children leaving for safety in England. My mother and father were lucky to obtain the visas to follow in March 1939.

After her arrival in England my mother used to embarrass me by asking every single English person she met to help her obtain a visa to get her parents out of Hitler's Vienna. In her refugee English she would explain how Vienna's shops were off-limits to Jews. Since her



brother, Paul, and his bride, Edith, had also emigrated to England, my mother's parents would starve, she said, were it not for Frau Resi. Frau Resi was my mother's cleaning woman. She had taken my grandmother's gold jewelry, broken it up, sold it piecemeal, and, at great risk to herself, was bringing my grandparents food to eat.

I remember Frau Resi's raisin eyes. She was a tiny woman. Frau Resi's husband, a cobbler,

[Proclamation]

## FODOR'S FOR THE BORN-AGAIN

*From a bulletin distributed last December by the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas.*

### BOYCOTT HAWAII

On December 3, 1996, a judge in Hawaii ordered that same-sex couples be allowed to marry. Henceforth, Hawaii is a moral leper colony, where none but the dregs of humanity will voluntarily go. Henceforth, Hawaii is fit only for fags, perfectly suited to be a sanatorium for the compulsory quarantine of all guilty, homosexual AIDS carriers. There they can eat, sleep, and copulate, and the whole of Hawaii will be their toilet. Hawaii, the Islands of the Damned. Anteroom to Hell. Sperm Bank of Satan.

### PATRONIZE CUBA!

Unlike Fidel Castro, our U.S. politicians are intimidated by the homosexual lobby and will not quarantine AIDS carriers. Castro has more sense in this matter than all of our moral midgets now in power combined.

To President Castro we say: This, Sir, is your golden opportunity. Open your island up as a vacation mecca where decent, snowbound Americans can go in lieu of Hawaii. Make and keep Cuba a clean, fag-free place, where predatory, disease-ridden sodomites continue to be rounded up and quarantined like the unclean dogs, hogs, four-footed beasts, and creeping things the Bible says they are. Thanks to a holy backlash by decent people against the filthy, fornicating American faggots sucking, slobbering, and sodomizing one another until the red, white, and blue commingle to make passion pink, Cuba—long the target of arrogant American scorn, now lifted on the wings of touristic golden eagles—may become a bright, shining, prosperous island in the sun.

was a Communist and a dangerously outspoken anti-Nazi. I have what must be a false memory of an event I can know only from my mother's telling, for it goes back to a time when she was an inexperienced young housewife. My mother had demanded some chore that Frau Resi considered silly, and Frau Resi had responded memorably: "*Da hat sich die gnä' Frau einen Schass eingetreten.*" The sadly insufficient translation will have to be: "There's where madam has put her foot in a fart." My mother says that as she opened her mouth to voice an offended reprimand, she began instead to laugh helplessly. Frau Resi joined her. It was the beginning of a mutually devoted friendship between the two women that lasted until the Nazi edict forbade Aryans to work in Jewish households.

Then my father was fired from the bank, and our apartment was also Aryanized. We moved from Vienna into the living quarters over my grandparents' dry-goods store on the main square of Fischamend, a village close to the Czechoslovak border.

The local Nazis were the boys and girls with whom my mother and my Uncle Paul had gone to school. They wrote "*Kauft nicht beim Juden*" ("Do not buy from the Jew") in blood-colored paint on the walls of our house and lobbed stones into my bedroom. They leaned ladders against the upstairs windows, climbing in and out, and taking things away with them, including the radio on which we had been surreptitiously listening to the BBC. They backed a truck to the door and emptied out the store. They returned at night, knocked about the three men—my grandfather, my father, and my Uncle Paul—and gave us till daybreak to get out of the village. My grandfather and my mother were made to stay behind and close up house and store.

We now fast-forward to the 1940s. My Uncle Paul and his wife emigrated to the Dominican Republic, where pregnant, twenty-one-year-old Edith died. Paul obtained the visa that got my grandparents out of Europe. My grandfather died in the Dominican Republic. My father had died in England a week before the end of the European war. In 1951, our family's remnants—my grandmother, Paul, my mother, and I—arrived in America. My grandmother died in New York in 1958.

It is the Nineties. My Uncle Paul has a bad back and asks my mother for my grandfather's walking stick. My mother says that she does not have it. She says she remembers asking Herrman, the Nazi who evicted them, to let my grandfather take it, and remembers Herrman not answering her. He had pointed them out the door.

My mother remembers how she and my grandfather crossed the village square on foot,





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passing under the archway of Fischamend's medieval clock tower, which had a weather vane in the shape of a fish. As they approached the iron bridge that spans the River Fischer, a bus came from the direction of the Czech border. The driver stopped for them and helped them on. The bus brought my mother and my grandfather to Vienna, where my grandparents stayed on with my grandmother's sister, Frieda, until she and her husband were taken away to Buchenwald and killed.

My mother looks in the closet of her Manhattan apartment, and here is my grandfather's walking stick.

Now, if my grandfather's walking stick had to be left in the Fischamend house, it stands to reason that it could never have reached Frieda's Vienna apartment. It could not, consequently, have moved with my grandparents into the apartment in the Rotenturmstrasse where they lived until Paul sent the visa. It could not have come on the boat with them to the Dominican Republic, or been flown with my grandmother from the Dominican Republic to New York City. And yet here, leaning in the corner of my mother's Riverside Drive closet, is my grandfather's walking stick.

My mother watches her memory unravel; if the walking stick had not been left behind in Fischamend on that morning in August 1938, had my mother and my grandfather not walked across the square, or passed under the arch, or been picked up by the bus that brought them to Vienna? "There never was a bus route between the Czech border and Vienna," says my mother. How did my mother and my grandfather get to Vienna? My mother cannot remember. What she remembers is the nonexistent bus stopping for them on the iron bridge, and the bus driver getting out and helping my grandfather up the steps.

"And I've been thinking and thinking about Frau Resi breaking up mother's gold," says my mother. "What does that mean, to 'break' it? I have never understood how you could 'break' gold up. What gold? Omama didn't have jewelry except for a gold watch, which she had sold years before to pay for Tante Frieda's stomach operation." My mother concludes that she had *hoped* someone was bringing my grandparents food to eat because she could not have lived if she imagined them starving.

And what of the bus on the iron bridge? I believe it is the work of the straggler, hope, operating backward to redeem an intolerable history. I think that a blessed, rose-colored falsehood introduced into that vicious era two righteous gentiles of my mother's imagining—a kind bus driver, a heroic cleaning woman—to make the past thinkable, the world livable.

[Apology]

## REVOLUTIONARY REGRETS

*From an open letter by Bernard Coard and other imprisoned leaders of the New Jewel Movement (NJM), which governed Grenada for four and a half years prior to the U.S. invasion in 1983. In 1979 the NJM overthrew the government in a coup and established the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG), a Marxist regime led by Prime Minister Maurice Bishop. In October 1983, after disputes with Bishop over the direction of the government, Coard and other PRG hard-liners arrested the prime minister and several members of his cabinet. Bishop was freed by his supporters, but within hours of his escape he was captured and executed. Six days later, President Ronald Reagan sent U.S. troops to Grenada to "restore order and democracy" to a country taken over by a "brutal group of leftist thugs." Coard and seventeen members of his faction were arrested by the government installed by American forces; in 1986 they were found guilty of murdering Bishop and other officials, and fourteen of them were sentenced to death. Their sentences were commuted in 1990, though they remain in prison. In the letter excerpted below, they insist that they did not have a fair trial and that although they are "morally responsible" for creating a climate that precipitated the murders, they did not commit them and "are legally entitled to . . . be freed unconditionally." The letter appeared in the February 8 issue of The Grenadian Voice, a weekly newspaper published in St. George's, the capital.*

TO: All ex-detainees of the People's Revolutionary Government

FROM: Some former leaders of the New Jewel Movement

Over the last several years we have become acutely conscious of the suffering you political detainees experienced during the four and a half years of the Revolution. We have heard some of you complain that to this day many people do not recognize your suffering, pretend that the Revolution did no wrong, or believe that you only got what you deserved. We can well understand the agony such statements and perceptions continue to cause you.

We believe and recognize that those of us who were leaders during the Revolution were collectively responsible for your suffering and must fully accept such responsibility. Thus we feel that the least we can do is to express to you our profound regrets and embarrassment, and offer you our sincere and unreserved apologies. The truth is that we have wanted to do this for several years now. But as you know, saying sorry does not come easily in our West Indian culture.



[Art Therapy]

## GIVE INNER PEACE A CHANCE



*This painting was commissioned by Canada's Department of National Defence (DND) in order to boost the morale of the country's armed forces in the wake of recent crises, including the fatal beating of a Somali youth by Canadian soldiers. At a conference last spring, Carolyn Butts, an artist, worked with soldiers, using "their inner-most thoughts" about the possibility for change within the military. The resulting painting appeared in the August 1996 issue of Defence 2000 News, a newsletter published by the DND.*

We are also conscious that prison has bonded us to you. We have been living for the last thirteen years in the same cells that you occupied. The graffiti inscribed by some of you is still with us. We share many of the utensils and facilities you used. We shared *Man's Search for Meaning*, the book written by Dr. Frankel about his experiences in a Nazi concentration camp, with tips on how he coped. We are told that it was widely read within the detainee community and that it proved a source of great strength. For many of us, too, it has been a virtual lifeline, providing courage and hope in the face of immense odds.

Through all of our reflection we have come to see you as individuals with names, with families and relatives, and even with idiosyncrasies, instead of as "counters," "destabilizers," etc. We truly have come to appreciate that, ultimately, the political label or outlook a person may carry at a particular time matters little. What matters most is the individual, the "content of the character."

And so we have had to ask ourselves, why

did we take the course of imprisoning you during the days of the Revolution? We think there were reasons, though no excuses.

**T**he context of your unjust treatment:

A. The manner of taking power

The fact that we were forced to take power by unconstitutional means shaped many of our actions and decisions in the first six months of the Revolution. We believed in the view expressed in the preamble to the American Declaration of Independence that when a people are left with no alternative, it is their God-given and inalienable right to forcibly remove their oppressors. We now recognize that such a course of action is bound to result in dislocation; in hardships for many people, including some wholly innocent ones; in the suspension of constitutional rights; in arrest; in injury and loss of life. The responsibility falls on those who have assumed power in the name of the people to exercise restraint. We did not always measure up to this challenge.





"David Gonzales" and "Tanya Trujillo," from *Los Comanches*, a series of photographs by Miguel Gandert of mestizos in northern New Mexico. Gandert's style is modeled after the early twentieth-century portraits of Edward S. Curtis, who photographed American Indians throughout the West. According to Gandert, Curtis bypassed mestizo communities because his "vision of the Noble Savage" did not have "room for their ignoble Hispanicized brethren." Gandert's work is currently on display at the Andrew Smith Gallery in Santa Fe. He lives in Albuquerque.

## B. The Cold War

It is an indisputable fact that the government of the United States wanted to overthrow the Grenada Revolution from its inception. Grenada was seen by the U.S. as a mere piece on the Cold War chessboard. As young revolutionaries on a mission to transform our country, a mission supported by the overwhelming majority of the Grenadian people, we were not prepared to allow a foreign power to hold us back in any way. We believed that the U.S. would attempt to organize internal resistance in order to overthrow the Revolution. And in support of this view we had the Iranian (1953), Guatemalan (1954), Guyanese (1964), Chilean (1973), and Jamaican (1976 and 1980) precedents. In this context, we were morbidly afraid of internal opposition, seeing the hand of the U.S. government behind every manifestation of internal dissent. This state of mind quickly spread to virtually the entire population. In this siege mentality the civil and human rights of those who opposed us or even disagreed with us, sadly, counted for little. We just did not have the ma-

turity and wisdom at the time to recognize that many who dissented did so not because they were stooges of the U.S. government, CIA agents, or unpatriotic Grenadians, but because of their concerns about the nonexistence of checks and balances and because they felt, correctly, that as citizens they had the right to freedom of expression and the right to participate in the political process.

**W**e thank those of you who have called for our freedom. In the meantime we continue to carry our cross, to suffer. But we do so with dignity and with a spirit of reconciliation, which your willingness to forgive has played no small part in nurturing. As such, although we are disappointed and sad, we bear no bitterness, not toward any of the witnesses who gave false testimony against us, nor toward the judges who did not live up to their oaths in dealing with our case, nor toward anyone who wronged us in any way over the last thirteen years.

We are convinced not only that we will be freed but also that our names will be cleared of



the criminal convictions. And although we will always be prepared to assist our country in whatever way possible (e.g., by mobilizing investors, tourists, and aid for our country), we have ruled out any future involvement in politics for all time. When leaders have failed as disastrously as we did, the very least they must do is terminate their involvement in politics and lay to rest any political ambitions they may have had.

May God bless you all.

[Manual]

## PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE, CIA-STYLE

*From the "Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual—1983," a handbook written by the Central Intelligence Agency and used during the early 1980s to teach Latin American security forces how to extract information from prisoners. The manual was obtained in January through a Freedom of Information Act request filed by the Baltimore Sun as part of an investigation of the CIA's involvement in Honduras. In 1985, the CIA renounced the use of coercive interrogation techniques and amended the manual accordingly; in the copy obtained by the Sun, the original 1983 text is legible beneath the agency's handwritten revisions and deletion marks.*

### THE THEORY OF COERCION

The purpose of all coercive techniques is to induce psychological regression in the subject by bringing a superior outside force to bear on his will to resist. Regression is basically a loss of autonomy, a reversion to an earlier behavioral level. As the subject regresses, his learned personality traits fall away in reverse chronological order. He begins to lose the capacity to carry out the highest creative activities, to deal with complex situations, or to cope with stressful interpersonal relationships or repeated frustrations.

### COERCIVE TECHNIQUES

#### Arrest

The manner and timing of the subject's arrest should be planned to achieve surprise and the maximum amount of mental discomfort. He should therefore be arrested at a moment when he least expects it and when his mental and physical resistance are at their lowest—ideally, in the early hours of the morning. When arrested at this time, most subjects experience intense feelings of shock, insecurity, and psychological stress, and have great difficulty adjusting to the situation.

#### Detention

A person's sense of identity depends upon a continuity in his surroundings, habits, appearance, relations with others, etc. Detention permits the questioner to cut through these links and throw the subject back upon his own unaided internal resources. Detention should be planned to enhance the subject's feelings of being cut off from anything known and reassuring.

#### Deprivation of Sensory Stimuli

Solitary confinement acts on most persons as a powerful stress. The symptoms most commonly produced by solitary confinement are superstition, intense love of any other living thing, perceiving inanimate objects as alive, hallucinations, and delusions.

#### Threats and Fear

The threat of coercion usually weakens or destroys resistance more effectively than coercion itself. For example, the threat to inflict pain can trigger fears more damaging than the immediate sensation of pain.

The threat of death has been found to be worse than useless. The principal reason is that it often induces sheer hopelessness; the subject feels that he is as likely to be condemned after compliance as before. Some subjects recognize

[Tip]

## DISSENT: A BAD CAREER MOVE

*From advice given in the October 1996 issue of "STARreport: Information You Can Use," a newsletter published by the management of the Ventura County Star, a California newspaper, for its employees.*

**T**o be successful at your job, try not to be against anything. If you disagree with a new policy, don't be against it; be for modifications that will improve it. A new policy, program, or plan is usually someone's idea, and that someone might just be your boss. Even if that isn't the case, get on board by accepting the proposal, regardless of what you might think.

Once you have shown your support for the new policy, you can suggest ways to make it even better. Your suggestions will be viewed in a far better light than they would be if you had been fighting the new policy from the start.



that the threat is a bluff and that silencing them forever would defeat the questioner's purpose.

If a subject refuses to comply once a threat has been made, it must be carried out. Otherwise, subsequent threats will also prove ineffective.

#### Pain

The torture situation is a contest between the subject and his tormentor. Pain that is be-

ing inflicted upon the subject from outside himself may actually intensify his will to resist. On the other hand, pain that he feels he is inflicting upon himself is more likely to sap his resistance. For example, if he is required to maintain a rigid position such as standing at attention or sitting on a stool for long periods of time, the immediate source of discomfort is not the questioner but the subject himself. After a while, the subject is likely to exhaust his internal motivational strength.

Intense pain is quite likely to produce false confessions, fabricated to avoid additional punishment. This results in a time-consuming delay while an investigation is conducted and the admissions are proven untrue. During this respite, the subject can pull himself together and may even use the time to devise a more complex confession that takes still longer to disprove.

#### Hypnosis and Heightened Suggestibility

Answers obtained from a subject under the influence of hypnotism are highly suspect, as they are often based upon the suggestions of the questioner and are distorted or fabricated. However, the subject's strong desire to escape the stress of the situation can create a state of mind called "heightened suggestibility." The questioner can take advantage of this state of mind by creating a situation in which the subject will cooperate because he believes he has been hypnotized. This hypnotic situation can be created using the "magic room" technique.

For example, the subject is given a hypnotic suggestion that his hand is growing warm. However, his hand actually does become warm with the aid of a concealed diathermy machine. He may be given a suggestion that a cigarette will taste bitter and could be given a cigarette prepared to have a slight but noticeably bitter taste.

#### Narcosis

There is no drug that can force every subject to divulge all the information he has, but it is possible to create a mistaken belief that a subject has been drugged by using the "placebo" technique. The subject is given a placebo (a harmless sugar pill) and later is told he was given a truth serum that will make him want to talk and that will also prevent his lying. His desire to find an excuse for compliance, which is his only avenue of escape from his depressing situation, may make him want to believe that he has been drugged and that no one could blame him for telling his story now. This provides him with a rationalization that he needs for cooperating.

#### REGRESSION

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of all coercive techniques is to induce regression. A few

[Anecdote]

## UNHITCHED

*From Who the Devil Made It, a collection of Peter Bogdanovich's conversations with other film directors, to be published this month by Knopf*

**“W**ell, it was quite shocking, I must say—there was blood *everywhere*,” Alfred Hitchcock began suddenly from the rear of the elevator. We were at New York's St. Regis Hotel, heading down to the lobby. There was a slight flush to his cheeks from the several frozen daiquiris he had just drunk in his suite. The elevator had just stopped, three people dressed for the evening had joined us, and immediately Mr. Hitchcock had started to speak, sounding as though he were in midsentence and projecting in that careful and familiar TV tone of his. He went on, “There was a stream of blood coming from his ear and another from his mouth.”

The people had recognized Hitchcock immediately, but now they seemed purposely to avoid looking at him.

He went right on, gazing beatifically ahead of him as the elevator stopped again and another well-dressed couple came aboard: “Of course, there was a *huge* pool of blood on the floor, and his clothes were spattered with it—oh! it was a *horrible* mess.” No one in the elevator, it seemed to me, was breathing. “Blood *all* around! Well, I looked at the poor man and I said, ‘Good God, what *happened* to you?’” At this point the elevator doors opened onto the lobby and Hitchcock said, “Do you *know* what he *told* me?” and then paused. After a moment, and quite reluctantly, the other passengers moved out of the elevator and then looked back at the director as we walked away. After several foggy moments, I asked, “Well, what *did* he say?” and Hitch smiled benevolently, taking my arm, and said, “Oh, nothing—that's just my *elevator* story.”





"Shout," from a series of painted flags and quilts by Ronnie Cutrone. His work was on display last summer at the Phoenix Art Museum in Arizona. Cutrone lives in New York City.

noncoercive techniques also can be used to induce regression, but to a lesser degree than can be obtained with coercive techniques:

- Persistent manipulation of time
- Retarding and advancing clocks
- Serving meals at odd times
- Disrupting sleep schedules
- Disorientation regarding day and night
- Unpatterned questioning sessions
- Nonsensical questioning
- Ignoring halfhearted attempts to cooperate
- Rewarding noncooperation

Whether regression occurs spontaneously under detention or is induced by the questioner, it should not be allowed to continue beyond the point necessary to obtain compliance. A psychiatrist should be present if severe techniques are to be employed, to ensure full reversal later. As soon as possible, the questioner should provide the subject with the rationalization that he needs for giving in and cooperating. This rationalization is likely to be elementary, an adult version of a childhood excuse such as:

1. "They made you do it."
2. "All the other boys are doing it."
3. "You're really a good boy at heart."

[Inauguration Coverage]

## WITH LIBERTY AND TOTE BAGS FOR ALL

*From the January 22 issue of The Hotline: The Daily Briefing on American Politics, a newsletter published in Alexandria, Virginia.*

As seen on QVC, the home shopping television network, between noon and 1:00 P.M. on Inauguration Day:

12:00: Bob, the host, displays the Official 1997 Presidential Inaugural Invitation Set (item L-47400, \$240), which comes in a blue binder.

Bob: "Of course, QVC is completely nonpartisan. It just so happens that we have a Democratic president and vice president going in. . . . We just want you to have some of the memorabilia of the democracy. It's a proud day to be an American."

12:02: The Official 1997 Presidential Inaugural Pin by Ann Hand (item L-47392, \$45),





*"The Garden," an installation by Patricia Minson, on display last spring at the Yeshu Gallery in New York City. Minson lives in Room Top, New York.*

the Official 1997 Presidential Inaugural Plate (item L-47406, \$48), and the Official 1997 Presidential Inaugural Medallion (item L-47385, \$36 for bronze, \$695 for gold) are displayed.

12:04: Bob announces that QVC will show the swearing-in: "It is a ceremony that allows us to renew our democratic ideals. It allows us to renew our visions. Maybe reminds us to maybe take a look at our goals and our dreams as well."

12:05: Live shot of President Clinton taking the oath of office.

12:06: Bob: "I don't know about you, but that was pretty electric here at QVC. And really, when you think about taking us into the twenty-first century, we have some things to commemorate the electricity of that moment."

12:08: Dee from California calls about the invitation set.

Bob: "What does it mean to you?" Dee: "It just means so much to me."

Bob, later in the conversation: "And, you know, it's a great day to be an American too, because we've been able to maintain this for 200-odd years, regularly, all the way down the

line. And it makes you feel good, doesn't it?" Dee: "It just gives me such a great feeling, I mean, to be part of this, at least to watch it with QVC and C-SPAN. . . . Thank you a lot, Bob, and I like your cooking shows too." Bob: "Thank you, thank you very much. We're going to do one tomorrow, ten hours of cooking, starting at noon Eastern."

12:10: Cut to Clinton delivering inaugural address.

12:14: Nancy from Nevada calls about the pin.

Bob: "How do you plan to wear this?" Nancy: "On a suit, probably. You know, when I go out for something nice."

12:17: The plate (item L-47406) is shown again. Bob: "Imagine not only picking up the inaugural plate but picking up something by one of the great names in the world, Wedgwood. Combine the two and you have an heirloom." Later, Bob corrects himself: the plate is Woodmere china, not Wedgwood.

12:23: Helen from Texas calls about the plate.

Bob: "What does it mean to you as an American?" Helen: "I can't really put it in words



what it means to me." Bob: "You can feel it, though, you feel a sense of pride?" Helen: "Oh, yes."

12:24: Cut to tape of Vice President Gore earlier being administered the oath.

12:32: The Official 1997 Presidential Inaugural Button Set (item L-47402, \$9) is displayed. Bob shows a button portraying "Great Democratic Presidents of the United States." The button has Clinton at the center. Bob: "Mr. Clinton is the first Democratic president to be re-elected since Franklin Roosevelt, which makes this pin really quite unusual."

12:37: Bob shows the Official 1997 Presidential Inaugural License Plates (item L-47386, \$25 to \$45).

12:47: Live wide shot of the Capitol.

12:48: Bob shows the Official 1997 Presidential Inaugural Tote Bag (item L-47412, \$24).

12:56: Peggy from South Carolina calls and says that she has ordered the invitation set, the sweatshirt, the book, the plate, the mug, the buttons, the pearls, the pin, the pen, and the tote bag. Peggy: "QVC is just fantastic to bring us this opportunity."

[Speech]

## POETRY: OUR WORST-KEPT SECRET

*From the keynote address given by Richard Howard last May at the 1996 PEN Literary Awards ceremony in New York City. Howard is the poetry editor of The Paris Review and the author, most recently, of Like Most Revelations, a collection of poems.*

There has been an extraordinary development in our popular culture: I am referring to the establishment—by President Clinton no less, prompted by God knows which advisers—of National Poetry Month, which began with the April just past and apparently will recur with every April to come. I have never before known so well why April was declared by a poet to be the cruelest month.

So far, the symptoms of this particular National Month have been confined to certain bookstore windows, some television interviews and talk-show panels, various personal appearances, and chiefly—in a manifestation I find particularly noisome—to certain ragged bits of verse posted in the venues of mass transportation and mischievously entitled "Poetry in Motion." I understand that the institution of

Poetry in Motion preceded the institution of National Poetry Month by a considerable interval, and I am convinced that it is a far less drastic, less deleterious development than the National Month itself, which I have no hesitation in calling the worst thing to have happened to poetry since the advent of the camera

[Exercise]

## CHEWING THE FAT

*From Love Your Looks: How to Stop Criticizing and Start Appreciating Your Appearance, by Carolyn Hillman, published by Fireside.*

If you have trouble identifying positives about your weight, have a dialogue with your fat. Ask your fat what it does to help you and what positive images it projects. Whatever it says, listen to it nonjudgmentally and empathetically, so that you can really learn more about its role in your life.

If you are doing this in writing, first write out your question, then your fat's answer, your response, its response, and so on, the way a script for a play is written out. Write as fast as you comfortably can, and let whatever comes out come out, even if it doesn't make sense to you or you don't agree with it.

If you're doing this out loud, place two seats facing each other. Start by sitting in one of them, as you, and ask your question. Then shift seats and be your fat and answer. Again, just let it flow, as if you're an actress in character, feeling the part. When you're done, thank your fat for talking to you. Here's a sample dialogue:

FREDA: Fat, what do you do for me?

FAT: I protect you.

FREDA: How? And from what?

FAT: I protect you from being sexually harassed by projecting an image that says, "I'm big and you'd better not mess with me."

FREDA: But why do you do that? I'm not so afraid of being harassed.

FAT: Sure you are. Think about it.

FREDA: (*thinks about it*) You're right. I do really hate and dread the comments, leers, and touching or grabbing that some men do. I've always known that I can't stand it, but I never realized the extent to which it intimidates me. Thanks for helping me.

FAT: No problem.



and the internal combustion engine, two inventions that W. H. Auden once declared to be the bane of our modernity.

In between National Secretaries Month, during which (for the month, mind you) those in a position to have secretaries are adjured, on a national scale, to be good to them, and National Take Our Daughters to Work Month (I exaggerate: it is only a week), we have now wedged National Poetry Month. At last we have succeeded in wreaking upon poetry what the worst excesses of Progressive Education and the Palmer Method were helpless to effect: we have ghettoized a millennial human expression previously conceived as a pervasive part of conscious life, we have limited it to a temporal interval after which it need not trouble us for another eleven months, and we have finally avowed its insignificance in the clearest fashion we possess: we have declared poetry to be a National and a Monthly commodity.

Poetry was already a problematic, if not a despised, art among us. Despised because popular. More people are writing what they believe to be poetry, as any editor of a national magazine that publishes poetry can tell you, than ever before, yet many more are writing than are reading poetry, as you have so often heard. This situation is not a paradox; it is a necessary consequence of our cultural structure. The creative-writing divisions and the poetry workshops are functioning at a Stakhanovite level, if level is the word I want, for we write what we

wish to dispose of. We read only what we value and enjoy. So wretched, and so absurd, has the position of poetry writing become in our polity—unread though occasionally exhibited, despised though invariably ritualized, as at certain inaugurations—that not only are we determined to put the poor thing out of its agony but we have made it a patriotic duty to do so.

**A**lthough grave, the situation has not yet passed beyond the possibilities of a sort of recovery. I am here to offer, while there is still time enough and world, a modest proposal that may yet restore an art that was once the glory and the consolation of our race to something like its ulterior status. My proposal is simply this: to make poetry, once again, a secret.

For we have failed in our modern—our post-camera, post-internal-combustion-engine—effort to make poetry known; we have merely made it public. If we are to save poetry, which means if we are to savor it, we must restore poetry to that status of seclusion and even secrecy that characterizes only our authentic pleasures and identifies only our intimately valued actions.

Two anecdotes will press home my point.

Gertrude Stein, visiting the United States for the first time in thirty years, was invited to lunch at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, after her visits to Harvard and the White House on a lecture tour that passed through Cleveland. When Miss Stein reached Hollywood, she was interrogated closely by Sam Goldwyn himself as to her remarkable success with the public, especially remarkable in view of the difficulty of her texts. "How, Miss Stein, do you manage to get so much publicity?" asked the head of the studio, his question not entirely disinterested. "The secret of public attention, Mr. Goldwyn," replied Gertrude Stein, "is small audiences."

And more recently, the late Joseph Brodsky, when he was poet laureate of the United States, had the wisdom and the daring to propose placing a poetry anthology in every hotel bedroom in the country, actually replacing the Gideon Bible with a volume of assorted poetry and letting those whose desperate hours drive them to the printed page pasture here. Brodsky's idea was that poetry would become a secret, a private, an intimate resource. After all, we have known for some time why Scripture is the world's best seller: it is because this book has a secret. Because on every page, in every line, it hints at something that it does not reveal but that tempts us, arrests us, fascinates us all the more. It is the same secret that Gertrude Stein revealed to Sam Goldwyn—the secret that Scripture is addressed not to everyone but



From the London Spectator.



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...not to the public but to the individual. As that perverse Scripturalist André Breton put it, *le monde sera sauvé par quelques uns* ("the world will be saved by certain ones").

Brodsky was mistaken, of course, in assuming that poetry would flourish if it was easier to find—he ought to have known better from the

situation of his own poetry and from that of other proscribed poets in his native country during all those Stalinist decades. Poetry will flourish—in terminal capitalism as in terminating communism—only when it is harder to find, when it is perceived as a valuable and virtually disallowed production that must be sought by need and by desire. We must eroticize the situation of poetry where we have only sanitized it; we must remember that poetry is, in the ultimate sense, a secretion from within, not a suntan lotion for external use only.

It has been, perhaps, an honest mistake these last fifty years, the commodification of poetry—it has given employment to many poets within our academies, and to the makers of fine face creams everywhere—while it has managed to distract us from our heritage, to discourage us from reading the poetry of the past. But in its excruciation as National Poetry Month, the mistake is revealed for the malevolent destruction it undoubtedly is. Like the world itself, poetry will be saved by certain ones—by those who seek it out surreptitiously, as they seek out whatever they love and enjoy. No month, and even no week, is to be set aside for the public recognition of poetry—poetry is to be ours every minute of every night and day, all the year round, insubordinately, insatiably, in secret.

# [Lexicon] WEBSTER'S BY WEBSTERS

From "StreetSpeak," a list of slang terms posted on FishNet, a Web site for teenagers. The glossary, which is continuously updated, is composed of definitions submitted by visitors to the site.

*chiv*: Gentlemanly.  
EXAMPLE: Thank you for holding the door for me.  
That's so *chiv*.  
Where heard: At school.

*citizen low*: A person who breaks the rules or social norms of a group and thus becomes an outcast.

EXAMPLE: Elizabeth used to be the head of that clique, but she started dating the wrong guy, and now she's *citizen low*.

Where heard: I'm pretty sure I made it up.

*cometize*: What the Netscape button in the upper-right corner of the Netscape browser does when it's trying to locate a site.

EXAMPLE: Something must be wrong—when I click



"Losing a Friend (Melinda 1, 2, and 3)" by Martin Kersels. The photographs are on display last fall at Los Angeles' Modern Art in New York City. Kersels lives in Los Angeles.



on this link, Netscape just cometizes.  
Where heard: A computer-oriented friend.

eeb: Just a cool word to say.

EXAMPLE: "Eeb."

"What?"

"Eeb."

Where heard: My brother and his friends.

frapp: Very cool. (A derivative of "Frappuccino," a drink from Starbucks.)

EXAMPLE: "Check out my new outfit!"

"Hey, that's frapp!"

Where heard: A cheerleader.

gaffe: To mess up someone's plans.

EXAMPLE: *I was on my way to the party, but my girl gaffed me.*

Where heard: My son.

glampse: To stare or scrutinize.

EXAMPLE: *Wowzers! Take a glampse at that!*

Where heard: In a dream.

*I don't make the fries*: Used to express the idea that one does not have any influence on the outcome of life.

EXAMPLE: "Your mom called. You owe her money."

"Aw, why did you have to tell me that?"

"Hey, man, I don't make the fries."

Where heard: McDonald's.

moochie smoochie: Request for a kiss.

EXAMPLE: *Jessie: "I really enjoyed that movie, Cameron . . ."*

*Cameron: "Moochie smoochie?"*

*Jessie: "Sure."*

Where heard: Made it up.

my biff: To admit responsibility for a very bad situation.

EXAMPLE: "Oh my God, you just stepped on my hamster."

"Oh, my biff."

Where heard: My best friend's friend's boyfriend from New York.

PC: Private conversation.

EXAMPLE: *Go away, we're having a PC!*

Where heard: Camp.

same smell: Same thing.

EXAMPLE: "Wanna go skating at the mall?"

"I thought we were going to go shopping at the mall today."

"Same smell."

Where heard: My boyfriend made it up.

suitcase: A really boring person who isn't up to date with the latest trends.

EXAMPLE: *Look at that loser over there—he is such a suitcase!*

Where heard: Some cheerleader at school said it.

tape the gerbil: To study hard.

EXAMPLE: *He really had to tape the gerbil for that Biz 257 exam!*

Where heard: A pub.

what are you, new?: How could you not have known that?

EXAMPLE: "Did Mike and Jan break up?"

"What are you, new?"

Where heard: Texas.

wordrobe: A person's lingo.

EXAMPLE: *Shermie is a skater—as if you couldn't tell by his wordrobe.*

Where heard: I made it up and I thought it was clever, so I hope everyone will use it now.

[Story]

## THE CONVERSION

*From Lightning Song, a novel by Lewis Nordan, to be published next month by Algonquin Books. Nordan's story "An American Dream" appeared in the September 1995 issue of Harper's Magazine.*

**T**wirling camp was to be held each morning on the high school football field, weather permitting, Leroy's mama said, reading from the church bulletin. She looked up from the page to see that he and his sisters were listening. Her voice was very enthusiastic. Baton twirling was one of several suggested wholesome summer activities for children of the parish, she told them. "It sounds to me like the most fun of all. 'Fun and fellowship for all,'" Elsie read. Leroy squinted. What was going on here? "Now doesn't that sound interesting?" his mama said. "Wouldn't you say that sounds like fun, everybody?"

Leroy was suspicious. Something in the tone of his mama's voice told him—well, he wasn't sure what it told him. Why was she suddenly in such a good mood? Why was she figuring out wholesome activities?

"Twirling lessons for girls ages three through ten," she read. She looked up again. "Well, what do you think?" she said. "Sounds like fun, doesn't it? Don't you agree that this sounds like an excellent summer activity? It sure sounds like fun to me, baton twirling."

Uncle Harris was there as well. He was equally enthusiastic about twirling. He was nodding his head, he was agreeing with everything. In fact, he chimed right in. He said he had met the young woman who would be in charge of the camp. He said she was great, a really super gal. "An excellent twirler in her



own right," he said. The twirling teacher, he told everyone, was a high school girl named Ruby Rae. "A very high-quality baton twirler," Uncle Harris went on. "Professional, actually. They don't come any better than Ruby Rae. You'll see. You'll like her," he promised. "Scout's honor. Give you my word." He gave Leroy a special wink. "She's pretty!" he said.

Okay, so Leroy was right, this was a setup. He said, "Twirling is for girls."

Elsie said, "Not necessarily."

Harris said, "There are plenty of boy twirlers. Sure. The Ole Miss marching band had a couple of boy twirlers, if I remember correctly. Nothing wrong with boy baton twirlers."

Leroy said, "It's for girls. It says so right there, three through ten. I'm a boy. I'm twelve. I'm not doing it."

"We'll just ask if boys might be included as well," Elsie said. "Special dispensation, you know? It can't hurt to ask. Will it hurt anything to ask, Harris?"

"Not a thing. I give you my word."

"See, Leroy? Uncle Harris knows all about these things. Asking never hurt anybody, now did it?"

This deal had already been done. There was no use arguing, really. Something told Leroy that special permission had already been granted, he was already signed up. All his mama had to do was convince him to go along with it. What a gyp. Wholesome summer activities had already been set in motion. What a total gyp.

He said, "I'm not twirling."

Elsie became irritated with him now. She said, "Well, believe you me, no one is going to beg you to enjoy summer fun and fellowship, Leroy. This is a privilege, not a chore, young man. In fact, the instructor might not even let you twirl anyway, even if you did want to. So okay, that's it, then, no twirling for Leroy. Leroy's not going to be cooperative, count Leroy out. That's fine, Leroy, your sisters can have all the fun and fellowship themselves. I guess you'll just have to miss out on everything."

Leroy said, "I'm not twirling."

Elsie said, "Go get in Uncle Harris's car. Leroy, you'll have to come along with us for now, whether you twirl or not."

"I'm not twirling."

**L**eroy looked around the backseat. His sisters were holding silver batons with rubber tips, but there was no baton for Leroy. He said, "There's only two batons."

You had to shout to be heard with the top down. Elsie and Harris gave each other a look.

Elsie turned a little in her seat and said, "You're not twirling, remember?"

His sister Molly had a junior-size baton, silvery with rubber bulbs at either end. Hers was a smaller version of the model Laurie held. They were nice-looking instruments, Leroy had to admit that. Molly was content with hers. She was almost always content.

It was Laurie, though, who understood the meaning of the baton. She held it as if it were some sacred thing, Excalibur or the Holy Grail, a relic of the True Cross, you would think, from the look on her face, around which an aura had formed. Leroy was unaccustomed to seeing his sister so vulnerable, so nakedly in love and purely affected and unable to hide the fullness of her feeling. She stroked the baton with her fingers. It might have been a pet. She put her nose to the larger bulb at the end and breathed its fragrance of new rubber. She laid her small tongue upon it. She closed her eyes and savored the treasure in her hands.

Leroy immediately knew that she was right. He hated to admit it, but she was. He had never seen a baton so close, been in such intimate propinquity to one. He had never given one moment's thought to a baton, and yet now that it was here before him he could see nothing else, could not deny that it was a beautiful object, like art he might almost have been grown-up enough to think truly beautiful, its perfect shape, its admirable heft, its miracle of balance and form, the scarcely perceptible million indentations in the bright rod that gave its holder the confidence of skid-free traction even on a summer's day and with sweaty palms.

Leroy said, "Let me see that thing."

Laurie said, "Fuck you."

Leroy looked at his sister. Who was this child?

Then Laurie held out the baton as if to hand it over to Leroy.

She said, "You can touch it."

Leroy would have preferred resisting the temptation. He believed he would have been a better person if he could have said fuck you right back to Laurie, but he could not, he knew he could not. The baton was irresistible to him. He reached out. He touched it. He ran his hand along its length. He felt the subtle indentations in the shaft. He saw the glistening of sunlight upon its surfaces. He touched the rubber bulbs at either end, the greater and the lesser one. He looked up at Laurie and her hard eyes gave him further permission. He bent down his head and smelled the baton, shaft and bulbs, as his sister had done. He tasted it with his tongue. Lightly he bit it with his teeth. Laurie was kind to him, for once in her life. She did not snatch the baton away, did not make fun. She allowed Leroy to linger there, in this weird worship.





By Los Angeles photographer Jeff Burton. Burton travels to media events and photographs his subjects as they are being posed by others; this photograph was taken at a photo shoot of a high school athlete. It was on display last fall at Casey Kaplan in New York City.

For the only time in his life Leroy wanted to renounce himself, his whole identity, and to be a girl, to share this moment with his sister in a way that as a boy he could not, to commune more closely than even now he did, though it was hard to imagine how a moment could have been more intimate. For the first time in his life he thought that there might be something wrong, something sinful and irredeemable, about being born into the world a male child and not female.


He had not been wrong about the baton. Its perfection was real, all right. No one could deny its perfection. More than merely real or perfect, the baton was magic. There seemed little doubt of this now. It held invisible powers. Its entrance into his life signaled changes that would stay with him in perpetuity; blessing or curse, he did not know, or even care, really, so strong was its power to charm and change him. The power of it throbbed into his body like electric drums. It vibrated through his hand and up his arm and into his heart, where it made its imprint, a thumbprint and

more than a thumbprint, a mark that might as well have been an image of Leroy's own DNA upon his soul.

In this baton lay the universe, it seemed to Leroy, its every secret and all its beauty. Leroy wanted to twirl. He didn't care what he had said before. He renounced every belief he had ever held, every assertion he had ever made. He didn't mind the humiliation of changing his mind, of chasing a girl's dream. The baton was the living bone of him. Twirling suddenly lay at the marrow. He wanted to be a twirler, longed to be one, deep down. Somewhere near the beginning of the universe he already *was* a twirler. Twirling was his identity, his life's core. I am a twirler, he thought, whispered, prayed, as if in a foreign tongue to enhance the mystery: *Ich bin ein Twirler*.

His heart ached, his soul, to possess a baton, to twirl and twirl and twirl and twirl, endlessly, through infinite space and time, until the purest part of his very self became known to him and to all the universe. Twirl, he had to twirl, for God's holy sake I twirl, therefore I am. ■





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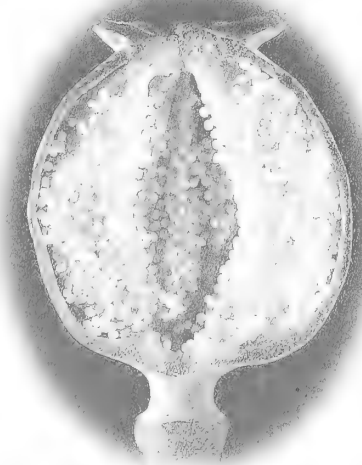


# OPIUM, MADE EASY

*One gardener's encounter  
with the war on drugs*

BY MICHAEL POLLAN

**L**ast season was a strange one in my garden, notable not only for the unseasonably cool and wet weather—the talk of gardeners all over New England—but also for its climate of paranoia. One flower was the cause: a tall, breathtaking poppy, with silky scarlet petals and a black heart, the growing of which, I discovered rather too late, is a felony under state and federal law. Actually, it's not quite as simple as that. My poppies were, or became, felonious; another gardener's might or might not be. The legality of growing opium poppies (whose seeds are sold under many names, including the breadseed poppy, *Papaver paeoniflorum*, and, most significantly, *Papaver somniferum*) is a tangled issue, turning on questions of nomenclature and epistemology that it took



me the better part of the summer to sort out. But before I try to explain, let me offer a friendly warning to any gardeners who might wish to continue growing this spectacular annual: the less you know about it, the better off you are, in legal if not horticultural terms. Because whether or not the opium poppies in your garden are illicit depends not on what you do, or even intend to do, with them but very simply on what you *know* about them. Hence my warning: if you have any desire to grow opium poppies, you would be wise to stop reading right now.

As for me, I'm afraid that, at least in the eyes of the law, I'm already lost, having now tasted of the forbidden fruit of poppy knowledge. Indeed, the more I learned about poppies, the guiltier my

Michael Pollan is editor-at-large of Harper's Magazine. He is the author of *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education* and *A Place of My Own: The Education of an Amateur Builder*, published last month by Random House.



poppies I examined and the more fruitful grew my days and to some extent also my nights. Until the day last fall, that is, when I finally pulled out my poppies' withered stalks and, with a tremendous feeling of relief, threw them on the compost, thereby (I hope) rejoining the ranks of gardeners who don't worry about visits from the police.

It started out if not quite innocently, then legally enough. Or at least that's what I thought back in February, when I added a couple of poppy varieties (*P. somniferum* as well as *P. paeoniflorum* and *P. rhoeas*) to my annual order of flowers and vegetables from the seed catalogues. But the state of popular (and even expert) knowledge about poppies is confused, to say the least; mis- and even disinformation is rife. I'd read in *Martha Stewart Living* that "contrary to general belief, there is no federal law against growing *P. somniferum*." Before planting, I consulted my *Taylor's Guide to Annuals*, a generally reliable reference that did allude to the fact that "the juice of the unripe pod yields opium, the production of which is illegal in the United States." But *Taylor's* said nothing worrisome about the plants themselves. I figured that if the seeds could be sold legally (and I found *somniferum* on offer in a half-dozen well-known catalogues, though it was not always sold under that name), how could the obvious next step—i.e., planting the seeds according to the directions on the packet—possibly be a federal offense? Were this the case, you would think there'd at least be a disclaimer in the catalogues.

So it seemed to me that I could remain safely on the sunny side of the law just as long as I didn't attempt to extract any opium from my poppies. Yet I have to confess that this was a temptation I grappled with all last summer. You see, I'd become curious as to whether it was in fact possible, as I'd recently read, for a gardener of average skills to obtain a narcotic from a plant grown in this country from legally available seeds. To another gardener this will not seem odd, for we gardeners are like that: eager to try the improbable, to see if we can't successfully grow an artichoke in Zone 5 or make echinacea tea from the roots of our purple coneflowers. Deep down I suspect that many gardeners

regard themselves as minor-league alchemists, transforming the dross of compost (and water and sunlight) into substances of rare value and beauty and power. Also, one of the greatest satisfactions of gardening is the independence it can confer—from the greengrocer, the florist, the pharmacist, and, for some, the drug dealer. One does not have to go all the way "back to the land" to experience the satisfaction of providing for yourself off the grid of the national

economy. So, yes, I was curious to know if I could make opium at home, especially if I could do so without making a single illicit purchase. It seemed to me that this would indeed represent a particularly impressive sort of alchemy.

I wasn't at all sure, however, whether I was prepared to go quite that far. I mean, *opium*! I'm not eighteen anymore, or in any position to undertake such a serious risk. I am in fact forty-two, a family man (as they say) and homeowner whose drug-taking days are behind him. Not that they aren't sometimes fondly recalled, the prevailing cant about drug abuse notwithstanding. But now I have a kid and a mortgage and a Keogh. There is simply no place in my grown-up, middle-class lifestyle for an arrest on federal narcotics charges, much less for the forfeiture of my family's house and land, which often accompanies such an arrest. It was one thing, I reasoned, to grow pop-

pies; quite another to manufacture narcotics from them. I figured I knew where the line between these two deeds fell, and felt confident that I could safely toe it.

But in these days of the American drug war, as it turns out, the border between the sunny country of the law-abiding—my country!—and a shadowy realm of SWAT teams, mandatory minimum sentences, asset forfeitures, and ruined lives is not necessarily where one thinks it is. One may even cross it unawares. As I delved into the horticulture and jurisprudence of the opium poppy last summer, I made the acquaintance of one man, a contemporary and a fellow journalist, who had had his life pretty well wrecked after stepping across that very border. In his case, though, there is reason to believe it was the border that did the moving; he was arrested on charges of possessing



*Papaver somniferum* (opium poppy)



the same flowers that countless thousands of Americans are right now growing in their gardens and keeping in vases in their living rooms. What appears to have set him apart was the fact that he had published a book about this flower in which he described a simple method for converting its seedpod into a narcotic—knowledge that the government has shown it will go to great lengths to keep quiet. Just where this leaves me, and this article, is, well, the subject of this article.

## I.

**B**efore recounting my own adventures among the poppies, and encounters with the poppy police, I need to tell you a little about this acquaintance, since he was the inspiration for my own experiments in poppy cultivation as well as the direct cause of the first flush of my paranoia. His name is Jim Hogshire. He first came to my attention a few years ago, when this magazine published an excerpt from *Pills-a-go-go*, one of the wittier and more informative of the countless “zines” that sprang up in the early Nineties, when desktop publishing first made it possible for individuals single-handedly to publish even the narrowest of special-interest periodicals. Hogshire’s own special interest—his passion, really—was the world of pharmaceuticals: the chemistry, regulation, and effects of licit and illicit drugs. Published on multicolored stock more or less whenever Hogshire got around to it, *Pills-a-go-go* printed inside news about the pharmaceutical industry alongside firsthand accounts of Hogshire’s own self-administered drug experiments—“pill-hacking,” he called it. The zine had a strong libertarian-populist bent, and was given to attacking the FDA, DEA, and AMA with gusto whenever those institutions stood between the American people and their pills—pills that Hogshire regarded with a reverence born of their astounding powers to heal as well as to alter the course of human history and, not incidentally, consciousness.

Hogshire’s reports on his drug experiments made for amusing reading. I particularly remember his description, reprinted in this magazine, of the effects of a deliberate overdose of Dextromethorphan Hydrobromide, or DM, a common ingredient in over-the-counter cough syrups and nighttime cold remedies. After drinking eight ounces of Robitussin DM,

Hogshire reported waking up at 4:00 A.M. and determining that he should now shave and go to Kinko’s to get some copies made.

That may seem normal, but the fact was that I *had a reptilian brain*. My whole way of thinking and perceiving had changed. . . .

I got in the shower and shaved. While I was shaving I “thought” that for all I knew I was hacking my face to pieces. Since I didn’t see any blood or feel any pain I didn’t worry about it. Had I looked down and seen that I had grown another limb, I wouldn’t have been surprised at all; I would have just used it. . . .

The world became a binary place of dark and light, on and off, safety and danger. . . . I sat at my desk and tried to write down how this felt so I could look at it later. I wrote down the word “Cro-Magnon.” I was very aware that I was stupid. . . . Luckily there were only a couple of people in Kinko’s and one of them was a friend. She confirmed that my pupils were of different sizes. One was out of round. . . .

I knew there was no way I could know if I was correctly adhering to social customs. I didn’t even know how to modulate my voice. Was I talking too loud? Did I look like a regular person? I understood that I was involved in a big contraption called civilization and that certain things were expected of me, but I could not comprehend what the hell those things might be. . . .

I found being a reptile kind of pleasant. I was content to sit there and monitor my surroundings. I was alert but not anxious. Every now and then I would do a “reality check” to make sure I wasn’t masturbating or strangling someone, because of my vague awareness that more was expected of me than just being a reptile. . . .

My interest in Hogshire’s drug journalism was mild and strictly literary; as I’ve mentioned, my own experiments with drugs were past, and never terribly ambitious to begin with. I’d been too terrified ever to try hallucinogens, and my sole experience with opiates had accompanied some unpleasant dental work. I’d grown some marijuana once in the early Eighties, when doing so was no big deal, legally speaking. But things are different now: growing a handful of marijuana plants today could cost me my freedom and my house.

We may not hear as much now about the war on drugs as we did in the days of Nancy Reagan, William Bennett, and “Just Say No.” But in fact the drug war continues unabated; if anything, the Clinton Administration is waging it even more intensely than its predecessors, having

## I was curious to find out if I could really brew opium at home without making a single illicit purchase





spent the night in the field, but enforcement last year and added federal death penalties for so-called drug kingpins—a category defined to include large-scale growers of marijuana. Every autumn, police helicopters equipped with infrared sensors scan the field paths over the farm fields in my corner of New England; just the other day they spotted thirty marijuana plants tucked into a cornfield up the road from me, less than a hundred yards, as the crow flies, from my garden. For all I know, the helicopters peered down into my garden on their way; the Supreme Court has recently ruled that such overflights do not constitute an illegal search of one's property, one of a string of recent rulings that have strengthened the government's hand in fighting the drug war.

Overflights and other such measures have certainly proved an effective deterrent with me. And anyway, the few times I've had access to marijuana in the last few years, my biggest problem was always finding the time to smoke it. Whatever else it may be, recreational drug use is a leisure activity, and leisure is something in woefully short supply at this point in my life. No small part of the pleasure I got from reading Hogshire's drug adventures consisted of nostalgia for a time when I could set aside a couple of hours, even a whole day, to see what it might feel like to have a reptilian brain.

Nowadays what leisure time I do have tends to be spent in the garden, a passion that in recent years has turned into a professional interest—I am, among other things, a garden writer. I mention this to help explain the keen interest I took in Jim Hogshire's subsequent project: a somewhat unconventional treatise on gardening titled *Opium for the Masses*, published in 1994 by an outfit in Port Townsend, Washington called Ecoponics Unlimited. The book's astonishing premise is that anyone can obtain opiates, cheaply and safely and maybe even legally—or at least beneath the radar of the authorities, who, if Hogshire was to be believed, were overlooking something rather significant in their pursuit of the war on drugs. According to Hogshire's book, it is possible to grow opium from legally available seeds (he provided detailed horticultural instruc-

tions) or, to make matters even easier, to obtain it from poppy seedpods, which happen to be one of the more popular types of dried flowers sold in florist and crafts shops.

Whether grown or purchased, fresh or dried, these seedpods contain significant quantities of morphine, codeine, and thebaine, the principal alkaloids found in opium.

Hogshire's claim flew in the face of everything I'd ever heard about opium—that the "right" kind of poppies grow only in far-away places like the Golden Triangle of Southeast

Asia, that harvesting opium requires vast cadres of peasant workers armed with special razor blades, and that the extraction of opiates is a painstaking and complicated process. Hogshire made it sound like child's play.

In addition to the horticultural advice, *Opium for the Masses* offered simple recipes for making "poppy tea" from either store-bought or homegrown poppies, and Hogshire reported that a cup of this infusion (which is apparently a traditional home remedy in many cultures) would reliably relieve pain and anxiety and "produce a sense of well-being and relaxation." Bigger doses of the tea would produce euphoria and a "waking sleep" populated by dreams of a terrific vividness. Hogshire cautioned that the tea, like all opiates, was addictive if taken too

## THE DEADLY POPPY FIELD

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They carried the sleeping girl to a pretty spot beside the river, far enough from the poppy field to prevent her breathing any more of the poison of the flowers, and here they laid her gently on the soft grass and waited for the fresh breeze to waken her.





many days in a row; otherwise, its only notable side effect was constipation.

As for the legal implications, Hogshire was encouragingly vague: "Opium, the juice of the poppy, is a controlled substance but it's unclear how illegal the plant itself is." Here is how I figured one might be able to toe the line safely between the cultivation of opium poppies, routine enough in the gardening world, and felony possession of opium: if opium is the extruded sap of the unripe seedpod, then the dried heads used to make tea *by definition* did not involve one with opium. Hogshire didn't go quite that far, but he did write that "it is unclear whether it is illegal to brew tea from poppies you've purchased legally from the store." As will soon become evident, Jim Hogshire is no longer unclear on either of these points.

Last winter Hogshire's lively little paperback joined the works of Penelope Hobhouse (*On Gardening*), Gertrude Jekyll (*Gardener's Testament*), and Louise Beebe Wilder (*Color in My Garden*) on my bedside table. Winter is when the gardener reads and dreams and draws up schemes for the borders he will plant come spring, and the more I read about what the ancient Sumerians had called "the flower of joy," the more intriguing the prospect of growing poppies in my garden became, aesthetically as well as pharmacologically. From Hogshire I drifted over to the more mainstream garden writers, many of whom wrote extravagantly of opium poppies—of their ephemeral outward beauty (for the blooms last but a day or two) and their dark inward mystery.

"Poppies have cast a spell over gardeners and artists for many centuries," went one typical garden writer's lead; this was, inevitably, quickly followed by the phrase "dark connotations of the opium poppy." But nowhere in my reading did I find a clear statement that planting *Papaver somniferum* would put a gardener on the wrong side of the law. "When grown in a garden," one authority on annuals declared, somewhat ambiguously, "the cultivation of *P. somniferum* is a case of *Honi soit qui mal y pense*. (Shame to him who thinks ill.)" In general the garden writers tended to ignore or gloss over the legal issue and focus instead on the beauty of *somniferum*, which all concurred was exquisite.

Reading about poppies that winter, I wondered if it was possible to untangle the flower's

physical beauty from the knowledge of its narcotic properties. It seemed to me that even the lady garden writers who (presumably) would never think of sampling opium had been subconsciously influenced by its mood-altering potential; Louise Beebe Wilder tells us that poppies set her "heart vibrating with their waywardness." Merely to gaze at a poppy was to feel dreamy, to judge by the many American Impressionist paintings of the flower, or from the experience of Dorothy and company, who you'll recall were interrupted on their journey through Oz when they passed out in a field of scarlet poppies. If ever there was an innocent angle from which to gaze at the opium poppy, our culture seems long ago to have forgotten where it is.

By now I too was falling under the spell of the opium poppy. I dug out my college edition of De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, and I reread Coleridge's descriptions of his opium dreams ("... how divine that repose is, what a spot of enchantment, a green spot of fountains and flowers and trees in the very heart of a waste of sands"). I read accounts of the Opium Wars, in which England went to war for no loftier purpose than to keep China's harbors open to opium clipper ships bound from India, whose colonial

economy depended on opium exports. I read about nineteenth-century medicine, in whose arsenal opium—usually in the form of a tincture called laudanum—was easily the most important weapon. In part this was because the principal goal of medical care at that time was not so much to cure illness as to relieve pain, and there was (and is) no better painkiller than opium and its derivatives. But opium-based preparations were also used to treat, or prevent, a great variety of ills, including dysentery, malaria, tuberculosis, cough, insomnia, anxiety, and even colic in infants. (Since opium is extremely bitter, nursing mothers would induce babies to ingest it by smearing the medicine on their nipples.) Regarded as "God's own medicine," preparations of opium were as common in the Victorian medicine cabinet as aspirin is in ours.

Is there another flower that has had anywhere near the opium poppy's impact on history and literature? In the nineteenth century, especially, the poppy played as crucial a role in the course of events as petroleum has played in our own century: opium was the basis of na-





tional economies, a staple of medicine, an essential item of trade, a spur to the Romantic revolution in poetry, even a *casus belli*.

Yet I had to canvass dozens of friends before I found one who'd actually tried it; opium in its



smokable form is apparently all but impossible to obtain today, no doubt because smuggling heroin is so much easier and more lucrative. (One unintended consequence of the war on drugs has been to increase the potency of all illicit drugs: garden-variety marijuana has given way to powerful new strains of sinsemilla; and powdered cocaine, to crack.) The friend who had once smoked opium smiled wistfully as he recalled the long-ago afternoon: "The dreams! The dreams!" was all he would say. When I pressed him for a more detailed account, he referred me to Robert Bulwer-Lytton, the Victorian poet, who'd likened the effect to having one's soul rubbed down with silk.

There was no question that I would have to try to grow it, if only as a historical curiosity. Okay, not *only* that, but that too. Again, you have to understand the gardener's mentality. I once grew Jenny Lind melons, a popular nineteenth-century variety named for the most famous soprano of the time, just to see if I *could* grow them, but also to glean some idea of what the word "melon" might have conjured in the mind of Walt Whitman or Chester Arthur. I planted an heirloom apple tree, "Esopus Spitzenberg," simply because Thomas Jefferson had planted it at Monticello, declaring it the "finest eating apple in the world." Gardening is, among other things, an exercise of the historical imagination, and I was by now eager to stare into the black heart of an opium poppy with my own eyes.

So I began studying the flower sections of the seed catalogues, which by February formed a

foot-high pile on my desk. I found "breadseed poppies" (whose seeds are used in baking) for sale in Seeds Blum, a catalogue of heirloom plants from Idaho, and several double varieties (that is, flowers with multiple petals) described as *Papaver paeoniflorum* in the catalogue of Thompson & Morgan, the British seed merchants. Burpee carries a breadseed poppy called "Peony Flowered," whose blooms resemble "ruffled pom-poms." In Park's, a large, mid-market seed catalogue from South Carolina (their covers invariably feature scrubbed American children arranged in a sea of flowers and vegetables), I found a white double poppy called "White Cloud" and identified as "*Papaver somniferum paeoniflorum*." Although I didn't know it at the time, all these poppies turn out to be strains of *Papaver somniferum*.

In Cook's, the catalogue from which I usually order my seeds for salad greens and exotic vegetables, I found *paeoniflorum* and *rhoeas*, as well as two intriguing varieties of *somniferum*: "Single Danish Flag," a tall poppy that, judging from the catalogue copy, closely resembles the classic scarlet poppies I'd read about and seen in Impressionist paintings; and "Hens and Chicks," about which the catalogue was particularly enthusiastic: "the large lavender blooms are a wonderful prelude to the seed pods, which are striking in a dried arrangement. A large central pod (the hen) is surrounded by dozens of tiny pods (the chicks)." More to the point, Hogshire had indicated in *Opium for the Masses* that "Hens and Chicks" might prove especially potent.

This was an issue I had wondered about: the ornamental varieties on sale in the catalogues had obviously been bred for their visual or, in the case of the breadseed poppies, culinary qualities. It seemed likely that, as breeders concentrated on these traits to the neglect of others, the morphine and codeine content of these poppies might have dwindled to nothing. So what were the best varieties to plant for opiates?

I couldn't very well pose this question to my usual sources in the gardening world—to Dora Galitzki, the horticulturist who answers the help line at the New York Botanical Garden, or to Shepherd Ogden, the knowledgeable and helpful proprietor of Cook's. So I tried, through a mutual friend, to get in touch with Jim Hogshire himself. I e-mailed him, explaining what I was up to and asking for recommendations as to the best poppy varieties as well as for advice on cultivation. As I would do with any fellow flower enthusiast, I asked him if he



had any seeds he might be willing to share with me and told him about the varieties I'd found in the catalogues. "How can I be confident that these seeds—which have obviously been bred and selected for their ornamental qualities—will 'work'?"

As it turned out, I picked the wrong time to ask. One morning a few days later, and before I'd had any response to my e-mail, I got a call from our mutual friend saying that Hogshire had been arrested in Seattle and was being held in the city jail on felony drug charges. It seems that on March 6 a Seattle Police Department SWAT team had burst into Hogshire's apartment, armed with a search warrant claiming that he was running a "drug lab." Hogshire and his wife, Heidi, were held in handcuffs while the police conducted a six-hour search that yielded a jar of prescription pills, a few firearms, and several bunches of dried poppies wrapped in cellophane. The poppies had evidently come from a florist, but Hogshire was nevertheless charged with "possession of opium poppy, with intent to manufacture and distribute." The guns were legal, but one was cited in the indictment as an "enhancement": another product of the drug war is the fact that the penalties on some narcotics charges rise steeply when the crime "involves" a firearm, even when that firearm is legal or registered. Neither Jim nor Heidi Hogshire had ever been arrested before. Now Jim was being held on \$10,000 bail; Heidi, on \$2,000. If convicted, Jim faced ten years in prison; Heidi faced a two-year sentence on a lesser charge.

Forgive me for the sudden upwelling of naked self-interest, but all I could think about was that e-mail of mine, buried somewhere on the hard drive of Hogshire's computer, which no doubt was already in the hands of the police forensics unit. Or maybe the message had been intercepted somehow, part of a DEA tap on Hogshire's phone or a surveillance of his e-mail account. I could hardly believe my stupidity! Suddenly I thought I could feel the dull tug of the underworld's undertow, felt as if I'd been somehow *implicated* in something, though exactly what that might be I couldn't say. Yet my confidence that I stood firmly on the sunny side of the law had been shaken. They had my name.

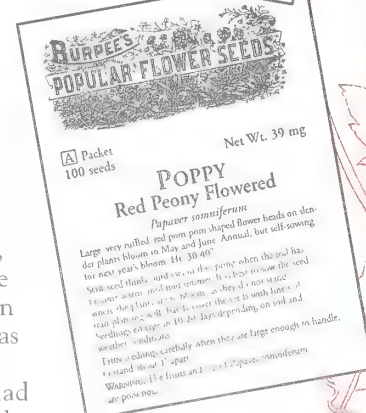
But this was crazy, paranoid thinking, wasn't it? After all, I hadn't *done* anything, except order some flower seeds and write a mildly suggestive piece of e-mail. As for Hogshire, surely there had to be more to this bust than a bunch of dried poppies; it didn't make any sense. I asked our mutual friend if he would be in touch with Hogshire anytime soon, because I was eager to talk to him, to learn more about his peculiar case.

"Also," I added, as casually as I could manage, "would you mind asking him whether he's gotten any e-mail from me?"

**2.**  
**M**y poppy seeds arrived a couple of weeks later. My plan was to sow them, see if I could get flowers and pods, and decide only then whether to proceed any further. I'd been spooked by Hogshire's arrest, doubly spooked to learn from our friend that in fact he had never received my e-mail—undelivered e-mail being highly unusual in my experience. But I still had little reason to doubt that growing poppies for ornamental purposes was legal, and so on an unseasonably warm afternoon in the first week of April I planted my seeds—two packets, each containing a thimbleful of grayish-blue specks. They looked exactly like what they were: poppy seeds, the same ones you find on a kaiser roll or a bagel. (In fact, it is possible to germinate poppy seeds bought from the supermarket's spice aisle. Also, eating such seeds prior to taking a drug test can produce a positive result.)

I'd prepared a tiny section of my garden, an area where the soil is especially loamy and, somewhat more to the point, several old apple trees block the view from the road. *Papaver somniferum* is a hardy annual that grows best in cool conditions, so it isn't necessary to wait for the last frost date to sow; I read that in the South, in fact, gardeners sow their poppies in late fall and winter them over. Sowing is a simple matter of broadcasting, or tossing, the seeds over the surface of the cultivated soil and watering them in; since the seeds are so tiny, there's no need to cover them, but it is a good idea to mix the seeds with a handful of sand in order to spread them as evenly as possible over the planting area.

Within ten days my soil had sprouted a soft grass of slender green blades half an inch high. These were soon followed by the poppies' first set of true leaves, which are succulent and spiky, not unlike those of a loose-leaf lettuce. The color is a pale, vegetal, green-tinged blue,





and the foliage is slightly dusted looking, "glaucous" is the horticultural term for it.

The poppies came up in thick clumps that would clearly need thinning. The problem was, how *much* thinning, and when? Hogshire's book was vague on this point, suggesting a spacing of anywhere from six inches to two feet between plants. My "straight" gardening books advised six to eight inches, but I realized that their recommendations assumed that the gardener's chief interest was flowers. I, of course, was less interested in floriferousness than in, um, big juicy pods. Eventually I called one of the seed companies that sell poppies and delicately asked about optimal spacing, "assuming for the sake of argument someone wanted to maximize the size and quality of his poppy heads." I don't think I aroused any suspicion from the person I talked to, who advised a minimum of eight inches between plants.

Around the time I first thinned my poppies, late in May, a friend who knew of my new horticultural passion sent me a newspaper clipping that briefly stopped me in my tracks. It was a gardening column by C. Z. Guest in the *New York Post* that carried the headline JUST SAY NO TO POPPIES. Guest wrote that although opium poppy seeds are legal to possess and sell, "the live plants (or even dried, dead ones) fall into the same legal category as cocaine and heroin." This seemed very hard to believe, and the fact that the source was a socialite writing in a tabloid not known for its veracity made me inclined to disregard it.

But I guess my confidence had been undermined, because I decided it wouldn't hurt to make sure Guest was wrong. I put in a call to the local barracks of the state police. Without giving my name, I told the officer who answered the phone that I was a gardener here in town and wanted to double-check that the poppies in my garden were legal.

"Poppies? Not a problem. Poppies have been declared a flower."

I told him the ones I had planted were labeled *somniferum*, and that a neighbor had told me that that meant they were opium poppies.

"What color are they? Are they orange?" This didn't seem especially relevant; I'd read that opium poppies could be white, purple, scarlet, lavender, and black, as well as a reddish-orange. I told him that mine were both lavender and red.

## **This was my first taste of what civil-liberties lawyers refer to as "the drugs exception to the Bill of Rights"**

"Those are not illegal. I've got the orange ones in my garden. About two feet tall, came with the house. What you've got to understand is that all poppies have some opium in them. It's only a problem if you start to manufacture opium."

"Like if I slit open a head?"

"Nah, you can cut one of them open and look inside. It's only if you do it with intent to sell or profit."

"But what if I had a *lot* of them?"

"Say you planted two acres of poppies—just for scenery looks? It's not a problem—until you start manufacturing."

I was happy to have the state trooper's okay, but by now a seed of doubt had been planted in my mind. Whether it was C. Z. Guest or the waylaid e-mail—that stupid, incriminating query careening unencrypted

through cyberspace—I'd started to get the willies about my poppies. A mild case, to be sure—except for one harrowing night in May when I was caught in the grip of a near-nightmare. In my dream I awoke to the sound of police car doors slamming out in front of my house, followed by footsteps on the porch. I leap out of bed and race out the back door into the garden to destroy the evidence. I start eating my poppies, which in the dream are already dried, dry as dust in fact, but I stuff the pods and the stems and the leaves into my mouth as fast as I possibly can. The chewing is horrible, Sisyphean, the swallowing almost impossible; I feel like I am eating my way through a vast desert of plant material, racing madly to beat the clock.

My first impulse on waking was to rip out my poppies right away. My second impulse was to laugh: so this was my first opium dream.

**W**hen Jim Hogshire entered my life, in April, my poppies were six inches tall and thriving, their bed a deep, lush carpet of serrated green. I'd heard that Hogshire had raised bail, and our mutual friend was trying to put us in touch; I wanted to talk to him about his case, which I was now thinking of writing about, but I also still hoped to pick up some horticultural tips. I couldn't phone Hogshire, because he'd been thrown out of his apartment. It seems that Washington, like many states, has a law under which tenants



charged with drug crimes may be summarily evicted; after the bust, someone from the sheriff's office had paid Hogshire's landlady a visit, notifying her of her "rights" in this regard and urging her to serve the Hogshires with an eviction notice. It sounded to me like a violation of Hogshire's right to due process—after all, he hadn't been found guilty of anything. This was my first introduction to what civil-liberties lawyers have taken to calling "the drugs exception to the Bill of Rights." Over the past several years, in cases involving drugs, the Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld the government's new crop of laws, penalties, and police tactics, thereby narrowing the scope of due process as well as long-established protections against illegal search, double jeopardy, and entrapment.

Hogshire began calling me at odd hours of the day and night. He sounded like a man who had been brought to the end of his tether, edgy and distrustful; disquisitions on *Papaver* nomenclature drifted into diatribes about the indignities his pet birds had suffered at the hands of the police. The voice on the phone was a far cry from the urbane and funny character I'd been reading in *Pills-a-go-go*. But then, Hogshire's bust had left him broke and homeless, bouncing from one friend's couch to another, and adrift on uncharted legal waters—for no one had ever been prosecuted before for possessing dried poppies bought from a florist. Much of what he told me sounded paranoid and crazy, an improbable nightmare featuring a "snitch letter" to the police from a disgruntled houseguest; a search warrant alleging, among other things, that Hogshire was making narcotics out of Sudafed(!); and a police officer who waved Hogshire's writings in his face and asked, "With what you write, weren't you expecting this?" Listening to Hogshire's fantastic account over the phone made me more than a little skeptical, and yet everything he told me I subsequently found confirmed in the court records.



According to documents filed by the prosecutor's office, it was indeed an informant's letter that led to the March 6 raid on the Hogshires' apartment; the letter, sent to the Seattle police by a man named Bob Black, was cited along with Hogshire's published writings as "probable cause" in the search warrant. Bob Black is the disgruntled houseguest, the black hat in Hogshire's bizarre tale. A fellow Loompanics author (*The Abolition of Work and Other Essays*), Black is a self-described anarchist whom the Hogshires met for the first time when he arrived to spend the night on February 10; Loompanics owner Mike Hoy had asked the Hogshires if, as a personal favor, they'd be willing to put Black up in their apartment while he was in Seattle on assignment.

The evening went very badly. Accounts differ on the particulars, as well as on the chemical catalysts involved, but an argument about religion (Hogshire is a Muslim) somehow degenerated into a scuffle in which Black grabbed Heidi Hogshire around the throat and Jim threatened his guest with a loaded M-1 rifle. Ten days later, Black wrote to the Seattle police narcotics unit "to inform you of a drug laboratory . . . in the apartment of Jim Hogshire and Heidi Faust Hogshire." The letter, a denunciation worthy of a sans-culotte, deserves to be quoted at length.

The Hogshires are addicted to opium, which they consume as a tea and by smoking. In a few hours on February 10/11 I saw Jim Hogshire drink several quarts of the tea, and his wife smaller amounts. He also took Dexadrine and Ritalin several times. They have

a vacuum pump and other drug-manufacturing tech. Hogshire told me he was working out a way to manufacture heroin from Sudafed.

Hogshire is the author of the book *Opium for the Masses* which explains how to grow opium and how to produce it from the fresh plant or from seeds obtainable from artist-supply stores. His own consumption is so huge that he must be growing it somewhere. I enclose a copy of parts of his book. He also publishes a magazine *Pills a Go*





...in the morning, the police ...  
...the police ...

...should know that they keep an M-1 rifle leaning  
against the wall near the computer.

Largely on the strength of this letter, the police were able to get a magistrate to sign a search warrant and raid the Hogshires' apartment. It was quarter to seven in the evening, and Jim Hogshire was reading a book in his living room when he heard the knock at the door; the instant he answered it he found himself thrown up against a wall. Heidi, who was at the grocery store at the time, arrived home to find her husband in handcuffs and a SWAT team, outfitted in black ninja suits, ransacking her apartment. The SWAT team was so large—twenty officers, by Jim's estimate—that only a few could fit into the one-bedroom apartment at a time; the rest lined up in the hall outside.

"Do you publish this?" Jim recalls one officer demanding to know, as he waved a copy of *Pills-a-go-go* in his face. And then, "Where's your poppy patch?" Jim pointed out that it was wintertime and asked the officer, "Why should I grow poppies when they're on sale in the stores?"

"You're lying."

This particular SWAT team specialized in

raiding drug labs, which may have been what they expected to find in the Hogshires' apartment. They had to settle, however, for dried poppies: a sealed cardboard box containing ten bunches wrapped in cellophane. The police refused to believe that Hogshire had bought them from a store. The police also found the vacuum pump Black had mentioned (though they didn't bother to seize it), the jar of pills, two rifles and three pistols (all legal), a thermite flare that Hogshire had bought at a gun show, a box of test tubes, and several copies of

*Opium for the Masses*.

The Hogshires spent three harrowing days in jail before learning of the charges filed against them. Heidi was charged with possession of a Schedule II controlled substance: the opium poppies. Jim was charged with "possession of opium poppy, with intent to manufacture or distribute," an offense that, with the firearms enhancement, carries a ten-year sentence.

At a preliminary hearing in April, Jim Hogshire was fortunate enough to come before a judge who raised a skeptical eyebrow at the charges filed against him. The hearing had its comic moments. In support of the government's assertion that Hogshire had intent to distribute, the prosecutor, apparently unfamiliar with the literary reference, cited the title of his book: "It's not called 'Opium for Me,' 'Opium for My Friends,' or 'Opium for Anyone I Know.' It's called 'Opium for the Masses.' Which indicates that it's opium for a lot of people."

The judge, a man who evidently knew a thing or two about gardening, found the language in the indictment particularly dubious: the state had accused Hogshire not of manufacturing opium but of manufacturing opium poppies. "How do you manufacture an opium poppy?" the judge asked, and then answered his own question: "You propagate them—it's the only way." By "propagate" the judge meant planting and growing, yet, as he pointed out, the state had presented no evidence that Hogshire had been doing any such thing. "If you had him with a field of poppies, then I think you've got him propagating them in some way. Particularly with the cut poppies and extracting the chemical." But without evidence that Hogshire had actually grown the poppies, the judge reasoned, there was no basis for the manufacturing charge.

The prosecutor sought to recover by citing snapshots seized in the raid that showed Hogshire in an unidentified garden with live poppies whose heads had been slit; he also claimed that "there are poppies outside of his apartment." (There may have been an element of truth to this: according to Hogshire, his landlady had had opium poppies in her gar-





den—though in early March, at the time of the raid, it would have been too early in the season for them to have come up.)

The judge was unpersuaded: “Can you tell me whether those are the relevant genus and species? My mom has poppies outside of her house.” The prosecutor could not satisfy the judge on this point, so the judge granted the defense’s motion to dismiss the sole charge against Hogshire.

One might think that this would have been the end of Jim Hogshire’s ordeal. But the state evidently wasn’t through with him, for in June, after dropping charges against Heidi in exchange for a statement asserting that everything seized in the raid belonged to her husband, the prosecutor refiled charges—this time for simple possession of opium poppies—and also added a new felony count to the amended indictment: possession of an “explosive device,” citing the thermite flare found during the raid. An arraignment on the new charges was scheduled for June 28. When Hogshire failed to appear, a warrant was issued for his arrest.

#### 4.

I read through the court papers with a mounting sense of personal panic, for the squabble in the Seattle courtroom did not in any way seem to challenge the underlying fact that growing or possessing opium poppies was apparently grounds for prosecution. I called Hogshire’s attorney, who confirmed as much and directed me to the text of the Federal Controlled Substances Act of 1970.

The language of the statute was distressingly clear. Not only opium but “opium poppy and poppy straw” are defined as Schedule II controlled substances, right alongside PCP and cocaine. The prohibited poppy is defined as a “plant of the species *Papaver somniferum* L., except the seed thereof,” and poppy straw is defined as “all parts, except the seeds, of the opium poppy, after mowing.” In other words, dried poppies.

Section 841 of the act reads, “[I]t shall be unlawful for any person knowingly or intentionally . . . to manufacture, distribute, or dispense, or possess with intent to manufacture, distribute, or dispense” opium poppies. The definition of “manufacturing” includes propagating—i.e., growing. Three things struck me as noteworthy about the language of the statute.

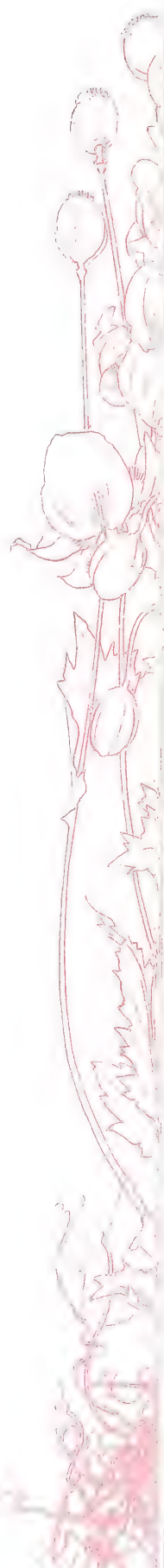
### **It didn’t matter one bit whether I went on to harvest my poppies: I had already crossed the line**

The first was that it goes out of its way to state that opium poppy seeds are, in fact, legal, presumably because of their legitimate culinary uses. There seems to be a chicken-and-egg paradox here, however, in which illegal poppy plants produce legal poppy seeds from which grow illegal poppy plants.

The second thing that struck me about the statute’s language was the fact that, in order for growing opium poppies to be a crime, it must be done “knowingly or intentionally.” Opium poppies are commonly sold under more than one botanical name, only one of which—*Papaver somniferum*—is specifically mentioned in the law, so it is entirely possible that a gardener could be growing opium poppies without knowing it. There would therefore appear to be an “innocent gardener” defense. Not that it would do me any good: at least some of the poppies I’d planted had been clearly labeled *Papaver somniferum*, a fact that I have—perhaps foolishly—confessed in these very pages to knowing. The third thing that struck me was the most stunning of all: the penalty for knowingly growing *Papaver somniferum* is a prison term of five to twenty years and a maximum fine of \$1 million.

So C. Z. Guest had been right after all, and Martha Stewart (and the state trooper) wrong: the cultivation of opium poppies, regardless of the purpose, is indeed a felony, no different in the eyes of the law than manufacturing angel dust or crack cocaine. It didn’t matter one bit whether I slit the heads or otherwise harvested my poppies: I had already crossed the line I thought I could safely toe—had crossed it, in fact, back on that April afternoon when I planted my seeds. (What’s more, I was vulnerable to the very charge that hadn’t stuck to Hogshire—manufacturing!) I was, potentially at least, in deep, deep trouble.

Or was I? For had anyone besides Jim Hogshire ever actually been arrested for the possession or manufacture of poppies? A Nexis search turned up no other case; nor did calls to more than a dozen lawyers, prosecutors, civil libertarians, and journalists who keep tabs on the drug war. Several were unaware that cultivating poppies was even against the law; when so informed, nearly all had precisely the same slightly bemused reaction: “Don’t you think the government has better things to do?” I certainly hoped that this was the case, but there the menacing statute was, right there on the books.





hoping to get a clearer picture of the risk involved in growing poppies. One told me a story

tipped off the county sher-

grown in local gardens; another had heard that the DEA had recently ordered the removal of the poppies growing at Jefferson's Monticello. (Both stories sounded apocryphal, but

true.) I phoned a radio call-in gardening show, asking the resident expert whether I needed to worry about the opium poppies growing in my garden: "I'm not a lawyer," she said, "but wouldn't it be a shame if gardeners had to pass up such a magnificent flower?"

No one had heard of an actual bust, and most of the gardeners I spoke to seemed blithely unconcerned when I apprised them of the theoretical peril. Some treated me carefully, as though it were paranoid of me to worry. The answer-lady at the New York Botanical Garden tried to reassure me (a bit patronizingly, I thought) by saying that, to her knowledge, there were no "poppy patrols out there." Wayne Winterrowd, the expert on annuals who'd written "Shame to him who thinks ill" of the poppy grower, likened the crime to tearing the tags off pillows and mattresses, another federal offense no one ever seemed to do time for. Laughing off my worries, he offered to send me seeds of a "stunning" jet-black opium poppy he grew in his Vermont garden. He also confirmed (as did a botanist I spoke to later) that "breadseed poppies" as well as *Papaver paeoniflorum* and *giganteum* were botanically no different than *Papaver somniferum*. I'd planted a handful of *paeoniflorum*, and had had no idea what they were—until now.

I took no small comfort in Winterrowd's mattress-tag analogy, if only because I really did not want to rip out my poppies, at least not now. For my first poppy was on the verge of bloom. It was the first week of July when I noticed at the end of one slender, downward-nodding stem a bud the size of a cherry, covered in a soft, hairy down. The bud's outer covering, or calyx, had split open, and I could see the scarlet petals folded inside,

ing morning the stem had drawn itself up to its full four-foot height and the petals—five deltas of rich red silk streaked with black—had completely unfurled, casting off their calyx and turning to face the sun. That solitary exquisite

## As I admired my poppies in their full midsummer glory, it was hard to credit the notion that they were illegal

bloom was followed the next day by three more equally formidable dabs of pigment, then six, then a dozen, until my poppy patch was a terrific, traffic-stopping blur of color, of a red

so red as to be platonic. Now I knew what Robert Browning meant when he spoke of "the poppy's red effrontery": this hue was a shout. The lavender blooms of another variety followed a few days later, a cooler but no less pure jolt of color. When the sun stood behind them, toward evening, the petals were as luminous as stained glass.

"It is a pity," Louise Beebe Wilder wrote, "that Poppies are in such haste to shed their silken petals and display their crowned seedpods." Having seen them, I would have to disagree with her, and not only on pharmacological grounds. The poppy's seedpods are scarcely less arresting than its flowers: swelling blue-green finials poised atop neat round pedestals (called stipes), each pod crowned with an upturned anther like a Catherine wheel. For most of the month of July my whole poppy patch was alive with interest. All at once and side by side you had the drooping sleepy buds, the brilliant flags of color, and the stately upright urns of seeds, all set against the same cool backdrop of dusty green foliage. I couldn't decide what was more beautiful: leaf, bud, flower, or seedpod. I did decide that this poppy patch was as gorgeous as anything I'd ever planted.

My fellow gardeners were making me feel foolish for even thinking of cutting down these flowers; indeed, as I admired my poppies in their full midsummer glory, this unexpectedly lavish gift of nature, it was difficult to credit the notion that they could possibly be illegal—that for the purposes of the law I might just as well be admiring packets of white powder on a table in some dingy uptown drug factory. But this, I knew, was indeed the case. And what a metamorphosis this was!—that an act as ordinary and blameless as the planting of a handful of common and perfectly legal seeds could somehow transport one into the country of criminality.

Yet this was a metamorphosis that required not only the physical seed and water and sunlight but, crucially, a certain metaphysical ingredient too: the knowledge that the poppies I beheld were, in fact, of the genus *Papaver* and the species *somniferum*. For although ignorance of the law is never a defense, in the case of poppies, ignorance of botany may be. True, I had planted seeds I knew to be *Papaver som-*



*niferum* and then blabbed that fact to the world. But what if instead I had planted “breadseed poppies,” or the poppy seeds on a poppy-seed bagel? What if I had planted only the *Papaver paeoniflorum* I’d ordered, the one I’d had no idea was really *somniferum*? As I stood there admiring the extravagantly doubled blooms of this poppy, I realized that growing it was no more felonious than growing asters or marigolds—for as long, that is, as I remained ignorant of the fact that this poppy, too, was *somniferum*. But it’s too late for me now; I know too much. And so, dear reader, do you.

It was precisely this knowledge that inspired the slightly cracked logic behind what I now decided to do. I had not planned to slit even one of my poppies, for fear that it was the step that would take me across the line into criminality. But now I knew I had already taken the fateful step. *In for a dime, in for a dollar*. I know, this wasn’t even a remotely rational approach to the situation: a slit seedpod in my garden would constitute proof that I knew exactly what kind of poppies I had. Yet that particular summer afternoon, as I stood there alone with my ravishing poppies, in what, after all, was my garden, this logic seemed strangely compelling. So I combed my little stand of poppies for the fattest, most turgid seed head and bent it toward me. Taking the warm, plum-size pod between my thumb and forefinger, I nicked its skin with a thumbnail. After a moment a small bead of milky sap formed on the surface; the wound continued to bleed for a minute or two, the sap darkening perceptibly as it oxidized, and then it slowed, clotting. I dabbed the drop of opium with my forefinger, touched it to my tongue. It was indescribably bitter. The taste lingered on my palate for the rest of the afternoon.

**W**hen I finally met Jim Hogshire in mid-July, it had been two weeks since his missed court date. He was staying in Manhattan, a good place to be anonymous, as he mulled over his next move.

On a hot summer morning we met for coffee on West Twenty-third Street; afterward, we planned to visit the flower district, to shop for dried poppies and check out a rumor that Hogshire had heard about a crackdown on imports of dried poppies. Hogshire was dressed all in white, a slender thirty-eight-year-old with long blond hair gathered in a neat ponytail. His face was handsome but careworn; his fine, angular features were lined, and his deep-set eyes, which are a striking shade of gray, were ringed with shadows. In conversation I found him alternately expansive and wary, though only rarely did he ask to speak off the record. For someone who had no place to live, who was one traffic stop away from going to jail, Hogshire seemed surprisingly composed—or at least a lot more composed than I would be under the circumstances.

Hogshire is passionate about poppies, and we covered that mutual interest for a while, shuttling from *Papaver* horticulture to jurisprudence, *Papaver* nomenclature to chemistry. I learned about the thirty-eight different alka-



loids that have been found in *somniferum*, the “biogenetic pathways” from thebaine to morphine (he lost me here), and the “incredible potential” of the “Bentley compounds” that have been synthesized from *Papaver bracteatum*. He told me that he’d first heard about poppy tea from a friend, a gardener whose Russian grandmother had brewed it as a home remedy. Hogshire started experimenting with poppies that he found growing “literally right outside the door of my apartment.”





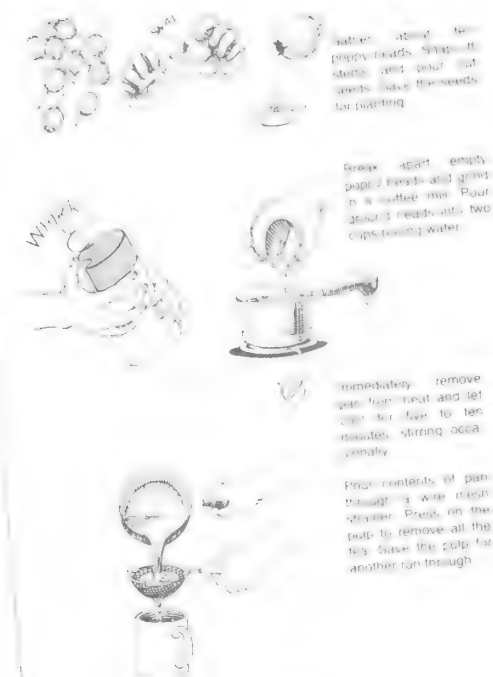


Figure 10-1  
How to make poppy tea

"The first few times I got it all wrong—I didn't grind the poppies up, and I was indiscriminate, using the leaves and stems as well as the pods. I also tried smoking all the various parts, using myself and my wife as guinea pigs. I proved to myself empirically that the heads are undoubtedly the most potent part of the plant." I realized that Hogshire regarded himself as heir to a great tradition of self-experimentation in Western medicine. Eventually he learned how to make a potent tea from dried poppies, pulverizing a handful of heads in a coffee grinder and then steeping the powder in hot water. I asked him to describe the effects of a cup of poppy tea.

"It's not a knock-you-on-your-ass sort of thing, not like smoking opium. In fact, a lot of people will tell you they forget that they are high. It starts with a tickling feeling in the stomach that then rises up into the shoulders and head—this feeling of just . . . joy. You feel optimistic about things; energetic but at the same time relaxed. You'll remain functional: you won't say anything stupid and you'll remember everything that happens. You won't nod out, though you will feel a strong desire to

close your eyes. Any pain you have will go away; the tea will also relieve exogenously caused depression. That's why poppy tea is served at funerals in the Middle East. It can make sadness go away."

It's hard to believe that commercially available flowers could produce such effects, and at times the claims in Hogshire's book had reminded me of earlier "household highs"—smoking banana peels, for instance ("they call me mellow yellow," Donovan had purred back in 1967), eating morning-glory seeds (purported to be a hallucinogen), or sipping cocktails made from Coca-Cola and aspirin. Could it be there was some sort of placebo effect at work here? Hogshire showed me a scientific article, from the *Bulletin on Narcotics*, that stated plainly that commercially sold dried poppies did indeed contain opiates, in significant quantities. He also pointed out that it was possible to become addicted to poppy tea. In his book he says, "Opium withdrawal hurts, but the pain will end, usually within three to five days. . . . Those are indeed hard days for the kicking addict but it is no worse than a nasty case of the flu." This certainly didn't sound like the effects of a placebo.

If Hogshire was right, then opium was hidden in plain sight in America—which certainly would explain why the government would take an interest in the author of *Opium for the Masses*. He and his small-press book had punctured a set of myths that have served the government well since 1942, when Congress decided that the best way to control opiates was to ban domestic cultivation of *Papaver somniferum* and force pharmaceutical companies to import opium (which they use to produce morphine and other opiates) from a handful of designated Asian countries. Since then the perception has taken hold that this legislative stricture is actually a botanical one—that opium will grow *only* in these places. The other myth Hogshire had exploded is that the only way to extract opiates from opium poppies is by slitting their heads in the field, a complex and time-consuming process that, I heard over and over again from law-enforcement officials and gardeners alike, made the domestic production of opium impractical.

The durability of these myths has obliterated knowledge about opium that was common as recently as a century ago, when opium was still a popular nonprescription remedy and opium poppies an important domestic crop. As late as 1915, pamphlets issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture were still mentioning opium poppies as a good cash crop for northern



farmers. A few decades before, the Shakers were growing opium commercially in upstate New York. Well into this century, Russian, Greek, and Arab immigrants in America have used poppy-head tea as a mild sedative and a remedy for headaches, muscle pain, cough, and diarrhea. During the Civil War, gardeners in the South were encouraged to plant opium for the war effort, in order to ensure a supply of painkillers for the Confederate Army. The descendants of these poppies are thriving to this day in southern gardens, but not the knowledge of their provenance or powers.

What Hogshire has done is to excavate this vernacular knowledge and then publish it to the world—in how-to form, with recipes. As far as I can tell, the knowledge in his book hasn't seeped too far into the drug culture—*Opium for the Masses* has sold between eight and ten thousand copies, and I turned up no evidence of widespread tea-brewing in drug circles—yet I was curious to know just how far knowledge *about* his knowledge had spread in law-enforcement circles. As Hogshire and I strolled the few blocks up Sixth Avenue to the flower district, he told me that, since the book's publication in 1994, the price of dried poppies had doubled and the DEA had launched a “quiet” investigation into the domestic poppy trade. Agents had paid visits to dried-flower vendors, as well as to the American Association for the Dried and Preserved Floral Industry, a trade group based in Westport, Connecticut. All this sounded to me like either boastfulness or paranoia—until, that is, we got to the flower district.

Manhattan's flower district is modest, a picturesque couple of blocks of lower Sixth Avenue where a few dozen dried- and cut-flower wholesalers have their showrooms at street level. As a pedestrian reaches Twenty-seventh Street, what had been a particularly dreary stretch of Manhattan suddenly erupts into greenery and bloom. Buckets of dried lotus heads and hydrangeas line the storefronts, gardenias in hanging baskets perfume the air, and clusters of potted ficus trees briefly transform the grubby sidewalk into a fair copy of a garden path. On Twenty-eighth Street we stopped in a narrow, cluttered shop that specializes in dried flowers. Hogshire surveyed a long wall of cubbies stuffed with unlabeled bunches of dried flowers—yarrow, lotus, hydrangeas, peonies, and roses in a dozen differ-

ent hues—until he spotted the poppies: four different grades, their seedpods ranging in size from marbles to tennis balls, most of them in bunches of ten wrapped in cellophane. The smallest ones still wore a green tint and had a few crunchy leaves wrapped around their stems. The larger poppy heads were buff-colored and strikingly sculptural. They reminded me of a botanical photograph by Karl Blossfeldt, the early-twentieth-century German photographer whose portraits of stems and buds and flowers make them look as if they'd been cast in iron. Hogshire asked the woman at the register if she'd had any problems lately obtaining poppies. She shrugged.

“No problems. How many you need?” I took a bunch, for \$10. I felt weirdly self-conscious about my purchase, and the plastic sack she offered me was too short for the long stems, so before we stepped back out onto the street I turned the bunch head-down in the bag.

We heard a very different story across the street, at Bill's Flowers. Bill told us that he couldn't get poppies anymore; according to his supplier, the DEA—or the USDA, he wasn't sure—had banned imports a few months before, “because kids were smoking the seeds or something.” The supplier had told him that it was okay to sell whatever inventory he had left but that there'd be no more poppies after that. Bill's story was my first indication that the federal authorities were, as Hogshire had claimed, doing *something* about the poppy trade—though it would take me several more weeks to figure out exactly what that something was.

Before the morning was over, Hogshire invited me up to his room; the day was getting hot, and he wanted to change his shirt. Most nights since his eviction he'd spent in the apartments of friends, far from home. Tomorrow he expected to be staying somewhere else. I'd asked him earlier why he hadn't stayed to face the charges in Seattle.

“I would go back in a second if I thought they were going to fight fair—if I could be sure they wouldn't manufacture evidence or slap me back in jail at my arraignment. But the fact that they wouldn't just drop this thing after the first charge was thrown out shows me they're being vindictive.” (By February, Hogshire had had a change of heart. He said that he'd retained a new lawyer and that he was planning to go back to Seattle to face the charges against him.)

## **Jim Hogshire and his book punctured a set of myths that served the government well for decades**





I sat on the 1, 1 while Hogshire changed his shirt. I stood around the cramped car. I could see he was traveling light, with little more than a change of clothes, his laptop computer, some books, a stack of articles about poppies, and a sheaf of legal papers about his case. I wondered what it would be like to slip underground—not to be able to go home, not to have your stuff around, not even to know exactly where you would be spending the next night, week, month.

## 6.

**E**asy as it may have been to distance myself from Hogshire's underground existence, riding home on the commuter train I found myself wondering just how much circumstantial distance really stood between Jim Hogshire and me. It was less than meets the eye, and far too little for comfort. I had poppies growing in my garden, after all, and I was preparing an article that would not only acknowledge that fact but would also reprise the very information that had gotten Hogshire into so much hot water. *With what you publish*, the officer had asked Hogshire as they hauled him off to jail, *weren't you expecting this?* So what, exactly, set us apart? For one thing, my life wasn't lived as close to society's margins as Jim's appeared to be; for another, I was writing for a national magazine rather than the fringe press. And this: I didn't associate with people like Bob Black.

I clung to these distinctions in the weeks that followed as I made a concerted effort to learn just how strongly the DEA really felt about poppies—whether, as Hogshire had suggested, the government had launched an investigation and crackdown on domestic opium growing. My curiosity on this point was journalistic but also somewhat more self-interested, and urgent, than that. For by discovering what the DEA was up to, I hoped to learn whether the paranoid fantasies gnawing at me had any basis in reality. I needed to know whether I should be getting rid of my poppies as quickly as possible or whether I could safely let them ripen and then perhaps experiment with poppy tea.

I started checking out Hogshire's leads. At the American Association for the Dried and Preserved Floral Industry, Beth Sherman con-

firmed that a DEA agent by the name of Larry Snyder had indeed paid the group a visit in 1995. "He asked us to put an article in our newsletter advising people not to carry this certain kind of poppy," she told me. The poppy had always been illegal, the agent had explained to them, but "prior to this they didn't enforce it. They were trying to correct something that had gotten out of hand, but they were trying to do it in a low-key way." The association agreed to publish an article supplied by the DEA informing their membership that it was illegal to possess or sell *Papaver somniferum*.

Hogshire had told me that a Seattle-area flower shop called Nature's Arts, Inc., had also been contacted by the DEA. I got in touch with Don Jackson, the shop's owner. Jackson, who has been in the dried-flower business for forty-five years, told me that a local DEA agent named Joel Wong had visited his shop in March of 1993. The agent had told Jackson that he was investigating poppies and wanted to know what kind his store carried and where they came from.

"He took away several poppies and had them tested. A few weeks later he told me that they were of the opium type and that someone could get high on it, but he didn't say I had to stop selling them." Since then, Jackson had heard rumors of a crackdown and said that he knew of several big domestic growers who had stopped planting poppies for fear of having their crops confiscated. Jackson was concerned about the disappearance of *somniferum* from the trade: "We don't have anything to replace it with," he explained.

"That seedpod is so nice and big and round. It's just what people are looking for as a focal point in an arrangement."

When I tried to get in touch with Joel Wong I learned that he'd recently retired. Another agent in his office took my call but insisted, at the end of a fifteen-minute chat, that I not quote him by name. Under the circumstances, I think I'll oblige. Agent Anonymous seemed to be unaware of his predecessor's investigation into dried poppies, so I changed the subject to poppy growing.

"It's illegal to grow opium poppies," the agent said, "but frankly I don't see it becoming a big problem, only because it's so labor-intensive to harvest the opium. You've got to

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go out early in the morning and slit the pods, then wait until the gum oozes out, and then you have to scrape it off pod by pod. Why would you do all this when you can go down to First and Pike and score some black tar?" (Black tar is a cheap form of heroin from Mexico.) "I say, let 'em at it—it's not going to be a big problem."

It was a friendly enough chat, so I figured I'd ask the agent what advice he'd give a gardener of my acquaintance who had opium poppies growing in his garden. "I'd tell him it's illegal and he's running a risk of getting his front door kicked. But I've got priorities. If he's a University of Washington botanist who's growing poppies, he's not going to have his door kicked; on the other hand, if this professor's scoring the pods, his door most likely will be kicked. It's on a case-by-case basis."

"But I would also tell him, Why grow this illegal plant when there are so many other beautiful plants you can grow? That would be my advice: Why grow the opium when you can put your energy into bonsai plants or orchids, which are so much more challenging? Because how many people can grow an orchid?"

I had told him that I was a garden writer, and he seemed eager to talk about orchid growing, his hobby; he mentioned he kept an orchid on his desk. But when I pressed him about my hypothetical opium-poppy grower, he turned distinctly less amiable.

"What if this poppy grower is also publishing articles about how to make poppy tea?"

"Then his door is going to be kicked. Because he's trying to promote something that's illegal."

It was a chilling conversation. I was reminded of something Hogshire had said about the laws governing opium poppies. "It's as if they had on the books a twenty-miles-per-hour speed limit that was never posted, never enforced, never even talked about. There's no way for you to know that this is the law. Then they pick someone out and say, Hey, you were going fifty. Don't you know the speed limit is twenty? You broke the law—you're going to jail! But nobody else is being stopped, you say. That doesn't matter—this is the law and we have the discretion. The fact that your car is covered with political bumper stickers that we don't like has nothing to do with it. This isn't about free speech!" Whatever else they may be, the drug laws are a powerful weapon in the hands of an Agent Anonymous or, for that matter, a Bob Black. With the speed limit set




so low, all it takes is an angry government agent or a "citizen informant" to get you pulled over—to get your door kicked.

**I**t was soon after my conversation with Agent Anonymous that I had my second opium dream. July was nearly over, and I'd come down with a case of Lyme disease, so my nights were already frightful enough, a roller coaster of fevers and bone-rattling chills. In the dream I awake to find faces pressed against the windows of my bedroom, five panes filled with five round white heads: slightly elfin, slightly Slavic-looking. It's a raid, I realize; they're looking for poppies. All night long they search my house, and then, at daybreak, they begin to scour my vegetable garden. They're examining every inch of soil, they're even dusting the leaves of my cabbages for fingerprints. My tormentors are peculiarly non-menacing, and in this dream I've already pulled out my poppies, so I should have nothing to worry about. Even so, I'm trying as hard as I can to watch all five of them at once, just to make sure they don't "plant" anything, but no matter which way I move, one of them is always blocking my view of the others. I move this way, then that, and the frustration of not being able to see what they're up to builds un-







til I think I'm going to explode. And then all at a sudden I spot a single, gorgeous lavender poppy in full bloom on the other side of the garden fence: an escapee. Will they notice it? I wake before I find out, the bedclothes drenched with perspiration.

Maybe the Lyme disease explains the nightmare—I'd had intense, fevered dreams all that week—but it could also have been the call I received from Jim Hogshire earlier that day, announcing that he was thinking of coming up to my place "to help out with the harvest." By comparison, the dream was a walk in the park, for here was a genuine nightmare: I was sick with a 103-degree fever, my joints so stiff I could scarcely turn my head, and a man who was wanted by the police and had no place to live was proposing to come over to help me harvest a crop that could land me in jail. My mind careened as I considered precisely how terrible an idea this was. Did I really want someone who might well, at some point, come under intense pressure from the police (*all right, Hogshire, who else can you finger?*) to see my garden? And once he had unpacked, how was I ever going to get my houseguest to leave? (*The Cable Guy* was in the movie theaters that week.) This is, I know, terribly unfair to Jim Hogshire, who strikes me as a decent-enough fellow, but I kept thinking about something disturbing that he'd told me: that, after his eviction, he had given some serious thought to turning in his landlady for growing opium poppies. I was also flashing on the figure of Bob Black, the Houseguest from Hell. I rifled my brain for a polite and halfway credible excuse, but this was a summit that social etiquette had not yet scaled. In the end I merely spluttered something pathetic about being too sick to think about having people over right now and needing to check with my wife before extending any invitations.

I also told Hogshire that I wasn't sure whether I was *ever* going to harvest, which was true. I didn't yet have a good enough fix on the DEA's intentions regarding poppies and, therefore, on the risk harvesting might entail. It appeared that the DEA was up to something, but *what*, exactly? I knew I should contact the DEA's Washington, D.C., headquarters, but knowing how opaque its agents can be (and being more than a little nervous about alerting them to my existence and interests while my plants were still in the ground), I de-

cided it might be best first to find out as much as I could about the scope of their domestic poppy campaign.

I called Shepherd Ogden at Cook's, one of the seed companies that sells opium poppies. He'd heard rumors that the DEA had sent letters to seed companies requesting they stop selling *somniferum*, though he hadn't received

one himself. Ogden reiterated what I already knew: that the sale of seeds is perfectly legal. Beyond that he was uncertain. He suggested that I check with the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers, a trade group in Oberlin, Ohio. As it turned out, the president of the association, a northern California flower grower named Will Ful-

ton, had just drafted a column for the latest issue of the association's newsletter alerting members to the DEA letter, which had been received by "one of our most reputable seed companies." The column quoted the letter's first paragraph:

It has come to the attention of the United States Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), that in certain parts of the United States the opium poppy (*Papaver Somniferum* L.) is being cultivated for *culinary and horticultural purposes* [the italics are Fulton's]. The cultivation of opium poppy in the United States is illegal, as is the possession of "poppy straw" (all parts of the harvested opium poppy except the seeds). Certain seed companies have been identified as selling opium poppy seeds, some with instruction for cultivation printed on the retail packages. Before this situation adds to the drug abuse epidemic, DEA is requesting your assistance in curbing such activity.

Judging by the spirited polemic that followed, Will Fulton is the Tom Paine of the cut-flower world. "Wait a minute!" he wrote. "Where's the *mens rea* [criminal intent] here?" Imagine yourself in the interrogation room, he asked his members: "So, you admit that you intended to cultivate for culinary or horticultural purposes."

"Why is it illegal to plant a seed, a gift from nature, when your only intention is to grow it for its physical beauty, yet at the same time it is perfectly legal to purchase an AK-47 when your only intention is gopher control?" True, the Founding Fathers had provided for a specific right to bear arms, but the only reason they'd had nothing to say "about the right to plant seeds [was] . . . because it never would have oc-



curred to them that any state might care to abridge that right. After all, they were writing on hemp paper."

When I reached Fulton at his flower farm in northern California, he identified the recipient of the DEA letter as Thompson & Morgan, a venerable British-owned company with offices in New Jersey. Lisa Crowning, the chief horticulturist at Thompson & Morgan, confirmed having received the letter, which she regarded as "intimidating" and "worrisome." Sent by registered mail in late June, the letter was signed by "Larry Snyder, Chief, International Drug Unit"—the same man who'd paid a visit to the American Association for the Dried and Preserved Floral Industry. Thompson & Morgan hadn't yet made a final decision on the DEA's request, but Crowning hoped the firm would continue to offer opium poppies, which she told me she grows in her own garden. Crowning had telephoned Larry Snyder, hoping that there might be "some halfway measure" that would satisfy the DEA (she mentioned putting a warning in the catalogue, or removing growing instructions from the packets) but found him completely inflexible. "We don't want to offend the DEA," she told me, "but we feel we are completely within our rights to sell these seeds."

The full text of Snyder's letter to Thompson & Morgan brought the alarming news that the DEA was indeed arresting poppy growers. It alluded to "a recent DEA drug seizure involving a significant quantity of poppy plants . . . many with scored seed pods . . . [that] revealed a supply of poppy seeds

noting the date of the shipment and the name and address of your company as the supplier. You should be aware that supplying these seeds for cultivation purposes may be considered illegal." After that thinly veiled threat, Snyder called for a "voluntary cessation of the sale of *Papaver Somniferum* L."

By October the horticultural grapevine was abuzz with poppy talk and what sounded to me like rumors of war. From Beth Benjamin at Shepherd's Garden Seeds I learned that the police had seized poppies from a public garden project for the homeless that the firm had backed in Santa Cruz. From Will Fulton I learned about a grower in northern California who had had his crop plowed under by the DEA. From the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) I learned that the DEA—in the

person of Larry Snyder—had formally requested that the group call for a voluntary ban on sales of poppy seeds; the association had complied, a staffer told me, "as a civic-duty type of thing." From Katie Sluder, an importer of dried flowers based in North Carolina, I learned that a container load of poppies that she had ordered from a grower in Holland had been turned back by U.S. Customs.

A crackdown was under way, but it was an oddly muffled crackdown. Rather than stage a few well-publicized raids, the DEA seemed to be pursuing a far more subtle strategy. It was working within the industry (in some cases by intimidating companies engaged in legitimate trade) to stanch supplies of both seeds and dried flowers without making any noise in public, much less publicizing exactly what people might be doing with poppies. The subtle hand behind these efforts apparently belonged to Larry Snyder, and I decided the time had come for me to talk to him. When I spotted his phone number printed in ASTA's newsletter, I felt as though I had stumbled upon the Wizard of Oz's direct line.

After I introduced myself as a garden writer, Snyder agreed to an interview. I began by asking his advice on the poppies growing in my garden. He came right to the point: "My advice

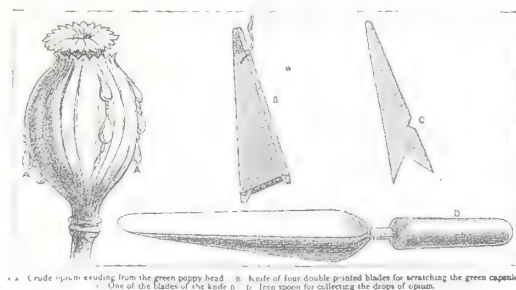
is not to grow them. It is a violation of federal law. I would get rid of them." He added that "we're not going into Grandma's garden and taking samples of her poppies" and confirmed that a gardener had to be growing *P. somniferum* with knowledge

and intent before the deed became a crime.

Perhaps trying to be helpful, Snyder pointed out that there are 1,200 other species of poppies I could be growing instead, including "*rhoeas* and *giganteum* and a jillion others." *Giganteum*? Wasn't that the one Wayne Winterrowd had said was just a strain of *somniferum*? I asked him to describe it. "It's got an even bigger capsule than *somniferum*. I've got one of them sitting right here on my desk."

Snyder acknowledged that the DEA had done nothing to enforce the laws against poppy growing until recently, after receiving "some information coming in out of the Northwest and California that people were making a tea from dried and fresh poppies."

Was he familiar with a book called *Opium for the Masses*?



a. Crude opium exuding from the green poppy head. b. One of the blades of the knife. c. Knife of four double-pointed blades for scratching the green capsule. d. Iron spoon for collecting the drops of opium.





After what felt to me like an uncomfortably long pause, he said simply, "We see most of the publications."

I might be mistaken, but it was my impression that Snyder grew suddenly curt with me at this point in our conversation. He refused to say anything more about the seizure mentioned in his letter to the seed companies, on the ground that it was "still an active case." When I wondered on what authority the DEA could stop seed companies from selling legal seeds, he cut me off: "If they sell for cultivation purposes, that is illegal." It was hard to see what other reason a seed company would have for selling seeds.

Then I asked Larry Snyder if he worried that his efforts might alert people to just how easy it is to obtain opiates in this country.

"There's always a risk that as more people become aware, some people will try it. It's kind of like announcing that the bank leaves the vault open at nine o'clock in the morning. Is that going to induce someone to rob the bank? Draw your own conclusions."

**T**he conclusion I drew was that the DEA was indeed trying to implement a quiet crackdown, attempting to shut down supplies of poppies, fresh as well as dried, without calling attention to the fact that, as I had discovered with Jim Hogshire's help, they are commonly available and easily converted into a narcotic. What was in the bank vault that Snyder alluded to was this very knowledge, still shut up behind a high wall of misinformation and myth. The DEA appears to be intent on keeping it there, making sure that domestic opium disappears before the knowledge gets out that it is, in fact, hidden in plain sight.

The government would seem to be walking a tortuously narrow path here, attempting to send one message to those who are in the know and a very different one to those who are not. This delicate balancing act was on full display in the seizure that Larry Snyder wouldn't discuss with me. I'm fairly sure that I now know what bust Snyder was talking about—or not talking about. On June 11, a few weeks before my own poppies had bloomed, the DEA and local law-enforcement agents in Spalding County, Georgia, raided the garden of Rodney Allen Moore, a thirty-one-year-old unemployed man, and his wife, Cherie. Agents seized 258 poppy plants, many of them with their seed capsules scored; two dozen marijuana seedlings; and several ounces of bagged marijuana. A search of the trailer in which the

Moore's lived turned up records indicating that the poppy seeds had been ordered from Thompson & Morgan and two other firms, as well as a copy of *Opium for the Masses*. Moore was charged with manufacturing morphine and possession of marijuana. Although he had no prior arrest record, he was (and as of February is still being) held on \$100,000 bail.

It does not appear that Moore's bust was part of any organized crackdown on people who grow poppies; acting on an anonymous tip, agents had come looking for a plantation of marijuana and apparently stumbled upon the poppies. But the way the raid was handled is, I think, indicative of the government's two-pronged strategy with respect to domestic opium. While with one hand the DEA took advantage of the bust to track down and apply pressure to the companies that had (legally) sold Rodney Allen Moore his poppy seeds with the other it sought to spread a thick cloud of disinformation about poppies before the public.

AGENTS TO CHECK ON HOW POPPIES ENTERED THE COUNTRY, read the page-one headline in the *Griffin Daily News*, alongside a photo of one of Moore's scored poppy heads. The article made no mention of the well-known seed catalogues found in Moore's trailer, which, of course, proved that his poppies had not "entered" the country at all. Instead it quoted Vincent Morgano, a DEA agent, claiming that the growing of opium poppies in this country was unheard of: "In my 25 years with the agency have never seen it grown in the United States. Clarence Cox, head of the Griffin-Spalding Narcotics Task Force, assured the press that the confiscated poppies are not the same kind that are commonly grown in American flower gardens; Spalding County Sheriff Richard Cantrel said that each of the 258 seedpods seized in the raid could, if properly harvested and processed, yield up to a kilo of heroin apiece. (Talk about alchemy!) Bill Maloney, also with the DEA, explained to a reporter that extracting narcotic from the pods entailed a very complicated and dangerous procedure: "I don't even think someone with a Ph.D. could do it." He also said that opium poppies were extremely rare in the southeastern United States. "The climate has to be just right," he explained. "The temperature have to be warm and you have to have the right amount of water."

All these assertions I read in the *Griffin Daily News*, which had taken them on faith. And why not? What reason would government officials have to lie about horticulture? Yet several of these statements I had already disproved in my own garden. I knew for a matter of fact that the poppies in question—*Papaver son-*



niferum—are indeed the same kind commonly grown in American gardens, and that growing them anywhere in the country is not by any stretch a horticultural challenge. And although I did not yet have direct knowledge that these poppies could be made into a narcotic tea, James Duke, a botanist I contacted at the United States Department of Agriculture, had told me that ordinary, garden-variety opium poppies did contain morphine and codeine, and that these alkaloids could easily and effectively be extracted from fresh or dried seedpods by infusing them in hot water—by making a tea. Duke, who has done extensive work on poppies and is something of a legend in botanical circles, further suggested that alcohol would make a better solvent for extracting alkaloids from poppies than water, which made sense: laudanum is a name for just such a tincture of opium. “You can get the equivalent of a shot of heroin from a good green pod dissolved in a glass of vodka,” Duke told me. “So you can see why they might be concerned.”

And why they might be inclined to lie. If opium is so easy to grow, and opium tea so easy to make, the best—perhaps the only—way for the government to stop people from growing and making their own is to convince them that it can't be done.

I had every reason to believe that James Duke and Jim Hogshire were right, and to doubt the statements of the government agents in Georgia. But it still seemed to me that, in light of the ever-thickening mist of mis- and disinformation swirling around the subject of poppies, the best way to nail down the last piece of poppy knowledge would be to perform a simple experiment on the flowers in my garden. I understood by now that the laws governing poppy cultivation had already expelled me from the country of the law-abiding; indeed had done so even before I knew it had happened. Since those laws drew no distinction between growing poppies and making poppy tea, there seemed to be no good reason *not* to take the steps needed to satisfy my curiosity.

Drinking tea was unlikely to put me in any greater jeopardy than I already was. But what about writing about the experience? It was with that troubling question in mind that I went in search of some legal advice.

## **Drinking opium tea was unlikely to put me in greater jeopardy. But what about writing about the experience?**

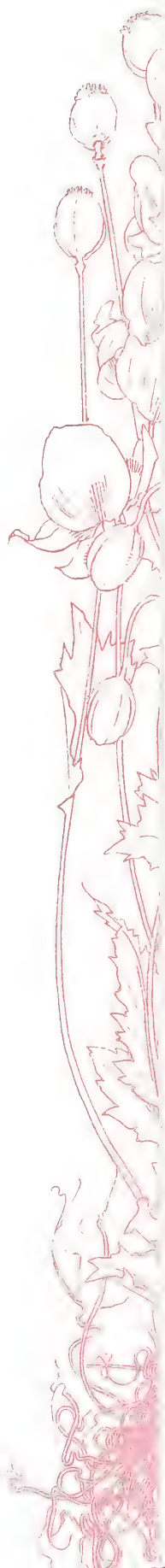
Many pages ago I mentioned that civil-liberties lawyers now speak in terms of a “drugs exception” to the Bill of Rights, and in the last few weeks I have had a chilling education into exactly what that means, under the tutelage of several criminal lawyers and one former district attorney. Throughout this whole experiment, my worst-case scenario, inspired largely

by Jim Hogshire's experience, has been the midnight visit from the police; the seed of my paranoia, the germ of my opium dreams, had always been the team of agents armed with a search warrant, tearing up my house and garden while my family and I look on helplessly. I had always assumed, though, that the government would need some physical evidence (surely

the poppies themselves!) or at least an eyewitness—*some* sort of independent corroboration of the fact that I grew poppies—before it could bring charges against me.

But after two decades of war against drugs, the power of the government to move against its citizens has grown even greater than many of us realize. According to the lawyers I've talked to, a search warrant may turn out to be the least of my worries. It is at least conceivable that a federal prosecutor could charge me with manufacturing a Schedule II controlled substance with no more evidence than the contents of this article. And then there is this even more disturbing fact: under federal asset-forfeiture laws amended by Congress in 1984 and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, the government could seize my house and land and evict my family from our home without convicting me of any crime, indeed without so much as charging me with one. My house and garden can be “convicted” of the crime of manufacturing opium poppies regardless of whether I am ever charged, let alone convicted, of that offense. That's because under the civil-forfeiture statute the standard of proof is much lower than in a criminal prosecution; the government need only demonstrate “probable cause” that my property was involved in a violation of the drug laws in order to confiscate it. What would it take to establish that probable cause? In the opinion of some of the lawyers who have read it, nothing more than the article you hold in your hand.

To borrow an expression from Jim Hogshire, I have exceeded the twenty-mile-an-hour speed limit that the government has posted (or not posted) over the growing of poppies; that







much this article has established. By publishing it, I enter a zone where the government possesses the means by which to make a mess of my life. Will its agents avail themselves of those means, will they pull me over? Obviously there's no way of knowing; a huge uncertainty has entered my life. But the decision now is theirs. And it is a decision that will be shaped by certain facts of a political and even rhetorical nature that I would be foolish to ignore.

I happen to believe that it would be no big deal to harvest a couple of seedpods from my garden, to crush and steep them in a cup of hot water, and to taste the resultant tea. (It certainly wouldn't take a Ph.D.) I happen also to think that it wouldn't be wrong to describe that tea as little more than an interesting home remedy—a powerful analgesic that also produces a mild sensation of euphoria. But that's my description. And now that I have made myself vulnerable to the government's police power, I am forced to weigh, if not honor, the government's very different description of those same acts: that making poppy tea is “manufacturing narcotics”; that printing its recipe and describing its effects in any but the most horrific terms would be “promoting drug abuse.” The

decision whether or not to prosecute a person turns not only on what crimes he may or may not have committed but also on what sort of story a prosecutor can tell about him. If I were to describe here the brewing and tasting of poppy tea, it would be that much easier for a prosecutor to tell a story in which I appear less like the countless thousands of poppy-growing gardeners to whom the police turn a blind eye each season and more like, well, Jim Hogshire.

Hogshire still calls and e-mails me now and then, from wherever. (“Before I say anything else,” one recent communication began, “I wanna make sure I remember your e-mail [address] right so write me back and tell me something you know . . .”) In our last conversation he urged me to be “extremely careful what you write, man.” Hogshire's experience certainly suggests that it is not my experiments with poppies that are apt to get me in trouble; it is the act of publishing an account of those experiments—the one act that, ironically enough, is constitutionally protected. Would Jim Hogshire have been prosecuted for the possession of store-bought dried poppies had he never published an upheaval how-to called *Opium for the Masses*? It seems doubtful.

We'll kick his door, Agent Anonymous had memorably vowed when I described to him a hypothetical author of articles about making poppy tea. Why? *Because that's promoting something illegal.* As the cases of Jim Hogshire and Rodney Allen Moore suggest, the government appears every bit as concerned with the supply of poppy information as it is with the supply of poppies themselves. With *what you write*, the arresting officer had asked Jim Hogshire as they drove him off to jail: *weren't you expecting this?* This is not a question I ever want to hear.

## 8.

**I**t was on a chilly afternoon last fall that I set to work pulling up my withered poppies. By now they had dried on the stalks, forming crinkled brown pods the size of walnuts. Examining the seedpods, I could see that the tiny portals circling the anther at the top of each capsule had opened, releasing the poppy seeds to the wind. The seed portals looked like the little observation windows circling the crown of the Statue of Liberty. I now the seeds had probably been dispersed all over the neighborhood and would probably come up on their own, willy-nilly, next spring.



What, I wondered, would be the legal status of poppies that had planted themselves?) I made a mental note to weed very carefully next season.

I was unsure exactly what to do with this crop of dead flowers—this *evidence*. I'd read that police no longer needed a warrant to search my garbage (another juridical fruit of the drug war), so throwing the poppies out with the trash was not an option. The seedpods I decided simply to crush in my fists; it was blowing fitfully that day, and the brown shards, light as chaff, were carried off on the wind. That left only the anonymous-looking stalks, which I decided to compost—somewhere *off* my property.

As I gathered up the poppy stalks, I reflected on the season's unusual harvest. Pride is a common enough emotion among gardeners at this time of year—that, and a continuing amazement at what it is possible to create, virtually out of nothing, in one's garden. I still marvel each summer at the achievement of a Bourbon rose or even a beefsteak tomato—how the gardener can cause nature to yield up something so specifically attractive to the human eye or nose or taste bud. So it was with these astonishing poppies: how can it be that such an inconsequential peck of seed could yield a fruit in my garden with the power to lift pain, alter consciousness, “make sadness go away”?

We have the scientist's explanation: the alkaloids in opium consist of complex molecules identical to the molecules that our brain produces to cope with pain and reward itself with pleasure, though it seems to me that this is one of those scientific explanations that only compounds the mystery it purports to solve. For what are the odds that a molecule produced by a flower out in the world would turn out to hold the precise key required to unlock the physiological mechanism governing the economy of pleasure and pain in my brain? There is something miraculous about such a correspondence between nature and mind, though it too must have an explanation. It might be the result of sheer molecular accident. But it seems more likely that it is the result of a little of that and then a whole lot of co-evolution: one theory holds that *Papaver somniferum* is a flower whose evolution has been directly influenced by the pleasure, and relief from pain, it happened to give a certain primate with a gift for horticulture and experiment. The flowers that gave people the most pleasure were the ones

that produced the most offspring. It's not all that different from the case of the Bourbon rose or the beefsteak tomato, two other plants whose evolution has been guided by the hand of human interest.

There was a second astonishment I registered out there that autumn afternoon, this one somewhat darker. As I threw my broken stalks on the compost and turned them under with a pitchfork, I thought about what it could possibly mean to say that this plant was “illegal.” I had started out a few months ago with a seed no more felonious than the one for a tomato (indeed, they had arrived in the same envelope), and, after planting and watering it, thinning and weeding and performing all the other ordi-

nary acts of gardening, I had ended up with a flower that rendered its cultivator a criminal. Surely this was an alchemy no less incredible than the one that had transformed that same seed into a chemical compound with the power to alter the ratio of pleasure and pain in my brain. Yet this second transformation had no basis in nature whatsoever.

It is, in fact, the result of


nothing more than a particular legal taxonomy, a classification of certain substances that appear in nature into categories labeled “licit” and “illicit.” Any such taxonomy, being the product of a particular culture and history and politics, is an artificial construct. It's not difficult to imagine how it might have been very different than it is.

In fact it once was, and not so long ago. Not far from my garden stands a very old apple tree, planted early in this century by the farmer who used to live here, a man named Matyas, who bought this land in 1915. (The name is pronounced “matches.”) The tree still produces a small crop of apples each fall, but they're not very good to eat. From what I've been able to learn, the farmer grew them for the sole purpose of making hard cider, something most American farmers had done since Colonial times; indeed, until this century hard cider was probably the most popular intoxicant—drug, if you will—in this country. It shouldn't surprise us that one of the symbols of the Women's Christian Temperance Union was an ax; prohibitionists like Carry Nation used to call for the chopping down of apple trees just like the one in my garden, plants that in their eyes held some of the same menace that a marijuana plant, or a poppy flower, holds in the eyes of, say, William Bennett.

## The government is just as concerned with the supply of poppy information as it is with the supply of poppies







Old timers around here tell me that Joe Matyas used to make the best applejack in town—100 proof, I once heard. No doubt his cider was subject to “abuse,” and from 1920 to 1933 its manufacture was a federal crime under the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution. During those years the farmer violated a federal law every time he made a barrel of cider. It’s worth noting that during the period of anti-alcohol hysteria that led to Prohibition, certain forms of opium were as legal and almost as widely available in this country as alcohol is today. It is said that members of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union would relax at the end of a day spent crusading against alcohol with their cherished “women’s tonics,” preparations whose active ingredient was laudanum—opium. Such was the order of things less than a century ago.

**T**he war on drugs is in truth a war on some drugs, their enemy status the result of historical accident, cultural prejudice, and institutional imperative. The taxonomy on behalf of which this war is being fought would be difficult to explain to an extraterrestrial, or even a farmer like Matyas. Is it the quality of addictiveness that renders a substance illicit? Not in the case of tobacco, which I am free to grow in this garden. Curiously, the current campaign against tobacco dwells less on cigarettes’ addictiveness than on their threat to our health. So is it toxicity that renders a substance a public menace? Well, my garden is full of plants—*datura* and *euphorbia*, castor beans, and even the stems of my rhubarb—that would sicken and possibly kill me if I ingested them, but the government trusts me to be careful. Is it, then, the prospect of pleasure—of “recreational use”—that puts a substance beyond the pale? Not in the case of alcohol: I can legally produce wine or hard cider or beer from my garden for my personal use (though there are regulations governing its distribution to others). So could it be a drug’s “mind-altering” properties that make it evil? Certainly not in the case of Prozac, a drug that, much like opium, mimics chemical compounds manufactured in the brain.

Arbitrary though the war on drugs may be, the battle against the poppy is surely its most eccentric front. The exact same chemical compounds in other hands—those of a pharmaceutical company, say, or a doctor—are treated as the boon to mankind they most surely are. Yet although the medical value of my poppies is widely recognized, my failure to heed what amounts to a set of regulations (that only a pharmaceutical company may handle these

flowers; that only a doctor may dispense the extracts) and prejudices (that refined alkaloids are superior to crude ones) governing their production and use makes me not just a scofflaw but a felon.

Someday we may marvel at the power we’ve invested in these categories, which seems out of all proportion to their artifice. Perhaps one day the government won’t care if I want to make a cup of poppy tea for a migraine, no more than it presently cares if I make a cup of valerian tea (a tranquilizer made from the roots of *Valeriana officinalis*) to help me sleep, or even if I want to make a quart of hard apple cider for the express purpose of getting drunk. After all, it wasn’t such a long time ago that the fortunes of the apple and the poppy in this country were reversed.

As I made sure the stalks were well interred beneath layers of compost, close enough to the heat at the center of the pile to blast them beyond recognition, I thought about how little had changed in my garden since Joe Matyas tended it during Prohibition, a time we rightly regard as benighted—and wrongly regard as ancient history. If anything, those of us living through the drug war live in even stranger times, when certain plants themselves have been outlawed from our garden with no regard for what one might or might not be doing with them. Prohibition never outlawed Joe Matyas’s apple trees (nor did it threaten this property with confiscation); it wasn’t until Matyas made his cider that he crossed the line.

But there it was, then as now, a line through the middle of this garden. Thanks to two national crusades against certain drugs that can be easily produced in it, both he and I found a way to violate federal law without so much as stepping off the property, and jeopardized our personal freedom simply by exercising it. In addition to inhabiting this particular corner of the earth, Matyas and I presumably had a few other things in common. There is, for example, the desire to occasionally alter the textures of consciousness, though I wonder if that might not be universal. And then there’s this: the refusal to accept that what happens in our gardens, not to mention in our houses, our bodies, and our minds, is anyone’s business but our own. Fifteen years ago, when I first moved into this place, some of the crumbling outbuilding dotting the property still bore crudely lettered warnings directed, I liked to think, at the dreaded “Revenuers” and anyone else the old farmer judged a threat to his privacy—to his liberty. KEEP OUT! went one, an angry scrawl painted in red on the side of a shed. My sentiments exactly.



# SHEARS OF THE CENSOR

Notes on excision,  
imprisonment, and silence

*By William Gass*

**D**ecades ago, when I was a young and very junior ensign in the U.S. Navy, I was ordered to censor the crew's mail before it left our ship. No one read what the officers wrote, for officers were gentlemen and would not babble, but enlisted men could not be trusted to be so discreet. At first I enjoyed the amused satisfaction that a sense of superiority brings, because the men wrote clichés in childish hands, and expressed themselves awkwardly, and concluded their letters with rows of Xs and Os: hugs and kisses supposedly but, according to the Navy's fearful rules, possibly the ship's position or destination in a clever code. These I had to scissor out. Blotting would not be sufficient, since X rays might reveal those treacherous kissy symbols in the act of spelling out their deepest secrets beneath the censor's blurt of black ink.

I watched my shears cut into the sheets and sentiments of these men. I was invading their feelings, first with my eyes and then with my silly surgery. No hugs. No kisses. A sentence such as "When we refueled at sea, Mom, a new movie came aboard, the one you liked so much, remember, with Esther Williams" would be removed as if it were an inflamed appendix.

Some sailors would be salacious even when they knew (perhaps because they knew) a stranger would read over their words, but that awareness had to inhibit many, and stopper their feelings. The self censors itself because it does not want to receive or inflict pain. The truth, of course, is a casualty.

*William Gass, author of *The Tunnel* and *Finding a Form*, is the director of the International Writers Center at Washington University in St. Louis. His most recent essay for Harper's Magazine, "The Art of Self," was published in the May 1994 issue.*



IF I FEAR THE SUPERIOR  
SENSUALITY OF WOMEN, I CAN  
DENY THEM THEIR PLEASURES  
WITH A CLITORIDECTOMY

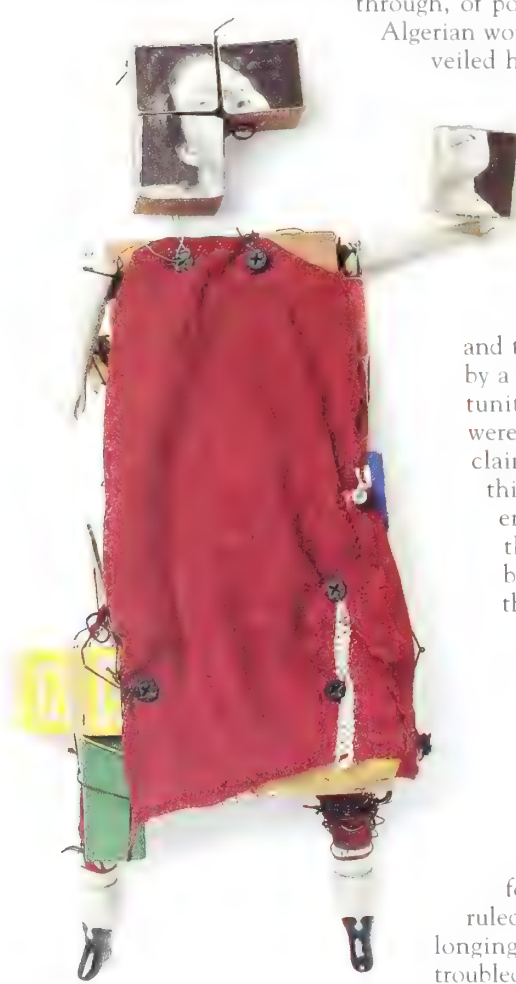
Recently I had the pleasure of delivering the encomium for the Algerian writer Assia Djebar when she was awarded the Neustadt International Prize for Literature. Her novels and stories concern themselves with the condition of women in her native land, a country from which she has been, because of her pen, exiled. Reading her, one realizes that censorship is not merely a media matter but takes many forms, and perhaps the most pernicious is the censorship of the body. If you put a person in prison because of her words, you are punishing her body only incidentally. You wish to stop her mouth from voicing her thoughts, thoughts that you would see silenced, frightened into formlessness. But women in many Muslim countries are persecuted precisely because they have bodies, because they have faces, breasts, thighs, because their private parts are prizes and may give pleasure to the male, provide him heirs, and sometimes—Allah forbid!—disgrace him.

Assia Djebar lays bare what has been concealed. She reverses the cut of the censor's shears. To expose, to lay bare—what an extraordinary and daring accomplishment. How many layers of concealment had to be removed? Seven veils? And each one symbolic, through and through, of political, sexual, and educational enstifflement.

Algerian women . . . their feelings held out of sight in their veiled heads, their ears allowed to hear prayers, their eyes given them to weep with, their fists to beat upon their chests, their mouths for ritual wailing, their Arabic softened as when women speak to women; kept in closed compounds, weighed upon by husbands who have been arranged for them, then fondled like a pipe stem; their entire life and outlook surrounded by the plans of men and the cruel and stupid tyrannies of male "-isms, by a land, for women, empty of openness or opportunity; followed always by death as though they were a bone to a starved dog, by a death that will claim them when they become worn and ill and thin from bearing the children they will see sick and die before they see their own death in the doorway. . . . Algerian women: who shall break open their silk cells and let them fly in the light?

If I fear the superior sensuality of women, I can try to deny them their pleasures and soothe my nerves with a clitoridectomy. A woman can no longer withhold herself from me, for I have withheld her preemptively. Her sexuality has been censored. More and more my little Navy scissors seemed obscene, my oversight mere peeping, my operations a form of malpractice. I cut along faintly blue ruled lines. It was perhaps the cruel removal of a longing, a greeting, from the simplest message that troubled me most. And the loved ones or friends who received and read the letters, how would they feel when they saw after "much love" that rectangular excision? So I just sealed and stamped "passed," kept my scissors closed, my eyes averted, my time saved, and my conscience salved.

In Afghanistan, unveiled women have been beaten with radio antennas ripped from parked cars. In Afghanistan, adulterers will be stoned as in





ne good old days. Surgeons are now forbidden to operate on female bodies, bodies that have been turned into sheeted ghosts more menacing than spiders. Women's schools are closed. And in Iran, bicycle seats, since they resemble saddles, are denied a woman's weight. And why are saddles denied them? They may not rise to such a height or ride astride a stallion. The gradient of oppression is long and steep; the climb, in those layered towns, is difficult. In every country, someone no longer a child is swaddled, another injustice is suffered, varied tyrannies are endured.

When men hide their women away, they are also hiding something of themselves, and the cruelties they practice are cruel to them too. If I am a ruler I grow bars and my heart is hard as pavement, and I soon see only one, the air is stale, and my food tastes of tin.

The censor cuts; the censor veils; the censor confines; the censor denies. All this is done for the sake of something higher: the stability, the good, of society. It is good to keep women in a harem and out of harm's way. It is good that they should remain ignorant of the male world and of men's business. Ideas should on no account be put in their heads. But then, a cultivated ignorance, a denial of intellectual opportunity, and the cancellation of the ordinary citizen's capacities are typical aims of most ruling classes. Can anyone seriously believe that the will of Allah is the will of Allah and not the will of a bunch of wickedly conniving, cruel, and frightened men bent on preserving their miserable privileges? I, although a lowly ensign, barely twenty and as ignorant of life as a shadow not yet cast, had the power of the scissors; and I had the power of the scissors because others had power over me; so when it was discovered that I, the censor, was not censoring, I was confined to my quarters, dishonored, and believed shamed.

Writers must reveal and accuse. With a prescience both sad and ironic, the Nigerian Ken Saro-Wiwa wrote a short story in the form of a letter from a confessed thief to a woman whom he once fancied. The letter, he tells her, will be smuggled from prison on the eve of his execution by a bribed guard "condemned," the prisoner writes, "to live, to play out his assigned role in your hell of a world." "Africa Kills Her Sun," the title of the story puns. The prisoner knows that his youthful flame will have read of his impending execution in the papers, because "We saw it, thanks to our bribe-taking friend, the prison guard, who sent us a copy of the newspaper in which it was reported." Saro-Wiwa continues:

Were it not in an unfeeling nation, among a people inured to evil and taking sadistic pleasure in the loss of life, some questions might have been asked. No doubt, many will ask the questions, but they will do it in the safety and comfort of their homes, over the interminable bottles of beer, uncomprehendingly watching their boring, cheap television programs, the rejects of Europe and America, imported to fill their vacuity. They will salve their conscience with more bottles of beer, wash the answers down their gullets and pass question, conscience and answer out as waste into their open sewers choking with concentrated filth and murk. And they will forget.

The Nigerian government arrested and jailed Ken Saro-Wiwa. He had not only written worrisome things, he had organized public resistance to Shell Oil's systematic pollution of the Nigerian environment. Some time passed; protests were, of course, proclaimed; and then he was hanged.

The censor pretends he is protecting tender hearts, shielding children from sex and violence, keeping the righteous on the right path, guarding against temptation, preserving virtue. How? By burning books, tearing out tongues, stretching necks, stoning women; through torture and imprisonment, by threats of violence against the victim's friends and family, by

THE CENSOR PRETENDS HE IS  
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THE CHIEF MODE OF CENSORSHIP  
IN THE UNITED STATES,  
A COMMERCIAL SOCIETY, IS,  
NATURALLY, THE MARKETPLACE

force-feeding his own people a philosophy not only false and wicked but false and wicked the day it was first announced by some imaginary lord and used to purchase or preserve his privileges and hoodwink the world.

Or by stealing the entire print run of the newspaper in which Berkeley students editorialized against affirmative action. Or by issuing idiotic accusations, such as that of philosophy professor Sandra Harding, who insists that the laws of physics were constructed to maintain white-male dominance. Or by posturing like the Afrocentric writer Hunter Adams, who boasted that the African people were the "wellspring of creativity and knowledge on which the foundation of all science, technology, and engineering rest."

There is always a position of power and privilege at risk when the censor snips, for what stone tree would fear the woodcutter's tiny saw? Sometimes one must fear a government as vicious as, presently, the Burmese. Sometimes one worries about what a brutal husband may do, or a father, or a teacher, or a policeman, or a soldier, or a priest. In addition to the power, petty or profound, there is always a doctrine, a teaching, a set of rules, rites, and reverences that secure this power and sustain its privileges, frequently by hiding the rulers' real aims behind benediction, smiles of goodwill, even acts of kindness, shows of concern, promises of safety and salvation.

Freethinkers throughout history have sought to expose these deceitful practices and to tell the truth about the real enemies of the mind. From Socrates and Cicero through Lucretius to Bruno, Spinoza, Hume, Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, that task has been bravely undertaken—the honor can be proclaimed and celebrated.

Each culture will produce its own pap. One may fill the days of its citizens with holy memories, and every hour will be a word in a sacred sentence. Another may put on parades and headlight the heavens, flank paths with bands and banners, put its citizens in snazzy uniforms, issue certificates for admirable performance, award medals to sneaks for snitching on their fellows, buss both cheeks of the worker who exceeded his quota this month in the production of military weapons. Our pap is pop. The commercial world we live in does not need to stoop to such amateur measures as Mariolatry or medals. Playing rock, I may wiggle and moan until there's not enough silence to entertain another thought. Violence on the screen conceals the real thing behind a cartoon; eyesores are only images; the shock a little cruel nudity creates is no more than the buzz my dope brings to my harnessed head. Dope is good because dope keeps dope out of my harm's way, and in theirs. Dope and dumbness keep the competition down. Throw them a pair of Levi's and let them eat Macs. Rap on their bars. In a world where money mostly matters, money buys mostly amusement. Waiting for the end through a double feature. The poppy of the people.

Work occupies, amusement preoccupies, promises attract, threats distract, rites reassure, dogmas deaden and disguise. When all is well, everyone is ill but does not know it. If you and I are "good," we are pious, we are patriots, we are dutiful, and we are purchasers. We'll not feel the price of its payment has been deferred till after our brave death in defense of our glorious country; and we can't discover how we were diddled and deceived about it, because we won't be around but will be moldering in the ground. Unless, of course, the other guys were right, and we are getting our damned infidel deserts: fire and ice each day, watching *The Three Stooges* for a thousand thousand nights.

The chief mode of censorship in a commercial society is, naturally enough, the marketplace. What will the bookstore stock, the library



end, the papers report, the publishers publish? Chain stores are now reading manuscripts in order to advise publishers what books they might like to see on their shelves. Pad a palm and it will put a handsome stack in the window. But they had better sell. Pancakes are given a slower turnover. My book was almost here today, how can it be so thoroughly gone tomorrow?

It is not that we suppress serious books entirely. But in capitalist countries, only on the margins can excellence be located. Poetry and most significant fiction have to find a few little magazines to appear in, or an occasional small press prepared to nourish them. However, those obscure mags are read only by their editors; the presses are being pennied to death while their distributors go bankrupt. The state spends less on literature than on its military bands. Back when the National Endowment for the Arts had a variable budget, only 3 percent of it went to literature; the rest was targeted for public spectacles of one sort or another. Now, quite predictably, funds must come from the private sector—that is, once again, from business, which wants a gang bang for its buck.

Places, sometimes euphemistically called “archives,” can be used to imprison texts. The author may be as dead as Lenin, but the texts are alive and must be confined. Not long ago, a number of documents by V. I. Lenin were published by the Western press. *The New York Times* reported that “there is likely to be more material in the secret vaults of the Presidential Archive, which is controlled by the Kremlin.” Lenin, who always wrote and spoke like a conspirator, probably would have approved his own suppression. Nixon may have thought every one of his words was wondrous, but he didn’t want them all known, no more than did the Texaco executives who planned on shredding evidence that might have revealed the executives’ discriminatory practices. A tape caught them and shredded their innocence.

How to disgrace that great anthology, the Bible: tell us that it is holy and nothing but the truth, for if I believe that, my brains will have been cut out and carried away to be fried. The only holy word is the free word. May they all be pronounced from every peak and steeple. The democracy of the word requires that all words be deemed equal—in any language, in any dialect, in any argot, in any slur or drawl or stammer. Good manners may suggest that in place of saying to a lady of doubtful character, “I see you are a slut,” you should say, “I see you have a free and easy spirit.” This inner check is self-censorship, usually thought to be of the best sort; but there are those, especially in these dim days, who fling their sensibilities like a rug in front of all feet, and then cry out when these are trod upon. In a free society, we should be free to give offense as well as take it; we should be allowed to be boors, if boors we are, so that others may be warned. We should be permitted crudeness for the same reasons; and playing the fool has always drawn crowds, applause, and remuneration.

Stupidity is not my strong suit, Paul Valéry said. Today, to attack reason is the pastime of professionals, of academicians who are busy betraying their calling, committing once again what French philosopher Julien Benda called “the reason of the clerks.” Well, one must bear it, bear the name-calling and the posturing and

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the hypocrisy of those who would curry favor with cliques and clubs and tribes of all kind. Native-American novelist Scott Momaday tells us that the Native Americans who object to scientific examination of the bones of their ancestors are not fearful of what the scientists will find out about their origins—they are confident that they came from the cave of the bear—but simply upset by the desecration of their sacred ground. The rest of us are supposed to say, "Well and good," respect these customs, and accede to these desires. The worship of old bones is an established human habit. Moreover, we are not supposed to think that a person who believes he came from the cave of his clan's bear is a dunce. All right. We shall fold back our inclinations and censor our good sense. To be polite.

When Karl Kraus criticized his Austrian society, when he wrote in support of pacifism and against the follies of the First World War, he was not merely being admirably brave. He was right. And he found a moral place in that society from which he could launch his criticisms. Sophists support the status quo until it changes. Then they support the new status quo. They are the friend of every place of power and are beloved by every regime, large and small, because they can offer no reasons for change. Except they aren't fast friends. They wiggle with the wind. And every tribal law is right—but only inside the tribe.

Every free breath poisons the tyrant's atmosphere. Assia Djebar's fiction suggests that each block walked without the veil is a block walked away from the Prophet, and weakens his minions. They know it is best that the eye be kept closed and see nothing, the ear be shielded from every sound, the mouth be shut and silent altogether; if one sense is allowed to be alert, clay feet may be sniffed, a king's clothes seen through clear to the clown's soul, the counterfeit coin bitten like rotten fruit and spat upon the ground.

The forms of censorship that concern most of us in this country (fortunately free of many of the worst kinds) are those that involve efforts to remove books from public libraries, newsstands, bookstores, and school curricula. Primary and secondary education, many believe, should be controlled by the community in which the children are being taught and brought up. This point of view, I think, has many merits, though perhaps not enough of them to deny our need for national standards. Nor can we be certain our own hands will remain clean. Do we really want racist novels read in our schools? To kids in their formative years? Especially in a society already poisoned by bigotry and distrust? Are we being morally responsible when we allow creationist nonsense the pretense of equality with the views of science, or are we merely being cowardly? We frequently refuse to stand up for rational principles out of a misguided sense of fairness and freedom.

At the heart of the problem, I think, is a distinction we ought to make between two ways in which people customarily believe their beliefs; and here I am not talking about how we ought to arrive at them, though that is certainly a significant matter, too. The difference I have in mind can be illustrated quite simply. If I was born in Poland, then my birthplace is a nonideological fact. If I then say that I am Polish, I am adding to that fact a cultural commitment. I am

allowing Polishness to define me. Actually I was born in North Dakota. I am a citizen of the United States. I reside and vote in Missouri. Do these truths make me an American? Not if I can help it, because I do not choose to be defined by a set of sentiments. To behave as a citizen ought is quite enough.





I can believe that life on this earth probably goes back 3.85 billion years because I just read a scientific report to that effect. Months from now, scientists may change their minds, and their mind change may change mine. But were I a short-termer, and believed life started only a brief while ago (in Biblical terms), and because this point of view is part of a system of ideas that I have allowed to define me, then it would not be open to me so easily to alter my opinions, since to do so would be to alter myself.

In short, the question is: Do I own my beliefs, or do they own me? If they own me, then the institutions that formulate and guard and sanctify these notions own me. I have joined a group. To say, "I am a philatelist and a member of the stamp club," is one thing. To say, "I love to collect stamps, and I attend meetings of the stamp club," is quite another.

If I am owned by an ideology, I am going to favor its defense as if I were being defended, because that's what will be happening. The free mind can open its fingers and let fall ill-favored fruit. Other ideas are always welcome. What is not welcome are views that hinder sight, that are themselves fists, that possess our souls like a disease, that say as Satan did to Faust after their bargain, "Now you are mine!"

Ken Saro-Wiwa commented on his country's condition but referred to us all: "The men who ordain and supervise this show of shame, this tragic farade, are frightened by the word, the power of ideas, the power of the pen; by the demands of social justice and the rights of man. Nor do they have a sense of history. They are so scared of the power of the word, that they do not read. And that is their funeral."

Because so many dogmas are obvious fictions, they can be maintained only by means of patient and repeated indoctrination, through promises of punishment and prompt retaliation for any lapse. One can identify falsehoods by finding the facts that tattle on them, but an equally good signal is the security that surrounds their insecurity: the walls and towers and guns and radio stations, the beating tom-toms, the pulsing pulpits, the political pronouncements, historical myths, martyred heroes, infallibles, and invincibilities upon whose shields the enemy's missiles must harmlessly ring and clatter to a holy ground.

The most efficient control is achieved when society is largely of one race and one opinion, and when its ignorance of its own ignorance has been made a part of the catechism. Society will therefore sanction (in fiction's positive sense) some beliefs, some actions, while at the same time sanctioning (in its negative sense) all others. Sour looks, injured feelings, disappointment, and disapproval, with the few rewards they signify, will be enough to control contrary opinions and keep them beneath the breath. Then we shall need no watchmen asking what of the night, for it will be daytime though it be dark, and no one will wonder why the dogs don't bark, because there won't be any beggars to bark at—no foreigners, no heresies, no differences. There will be only false alarms, pointless excursions, malfunctioning equipment.

Once the right ideas (through what will be benevolently called education) have been firmly fixed in every youthful head, and have achieved the serene status of "family values," so that they may age till blue like old cheese, then the empty field that the mind of the citizen will have become (all is known, no further action is necessary) will need to be filled with plays of thought resembling games of golf, with a pleasant pointlessness that brings on sleep as easily as Saro-Wiwa's interminable bottles of beer and cheap television shows. "The sleep of reason breeds monsters," Goya wrote beneath one of his grimmer etchings. But societies have been known to sleep for centuries. In quiet disregard of reality. In a peaceful quipoise disturbed only by a storm of sand, which sometimes buries even pyramids.

"THE SLEEP OF REASON BREEDS MONSTERS," GOYA WROTE. BUT SOCIETIES HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO SLEEP FOR CENTURIES





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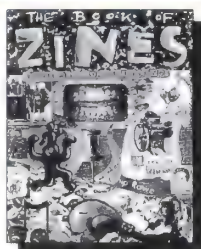
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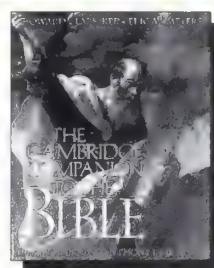


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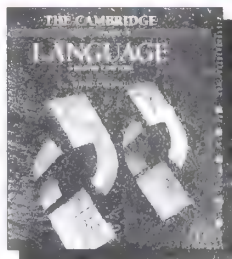
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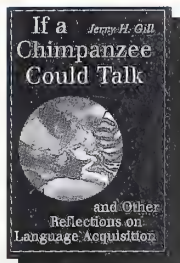
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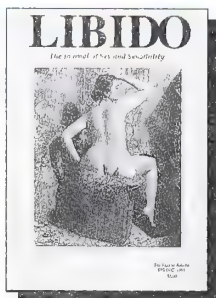
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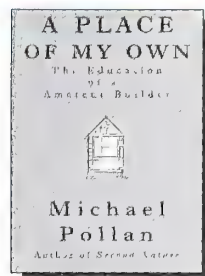
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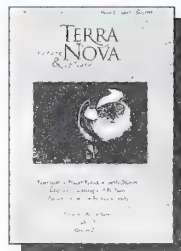
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# JUDGMENT DAY

In Rwanda, 92,392 genocide suspects await trial

By Alan Zarembo

**T**he inmates politely applaud and thousands of eyes follow the two Rwandan government ministers as they move toward a smooth wooden table furnished with two microphones and a plastic vase of fake flowers. It is late October 1996, and for the last few weeks the ministers have been on a tour of Rwanda's prisons, trying to convince tens of thousands of inmates to confess to genocide. Today has brought them to the prison in Kibuye, perched on Lake Kivu's stunning blue in western Rwanda, three hours from the capital, Kigali. Dragging a microphone toward him, one of the ministers launches into a lesson about the Holocaust, but his tales of blue eyes and blond hair six decades ago don't change the blank expressions in the sea of black faces before him, so he jumps to the hundred-day stretch in 1994 when the Republic of Rwanda's Hutu majority conducted a campaign of wholesale slaughter against the Tutsi minority. Ordinary citizens did much of the killing with the same tools they used to clear fields and butcher



livestock. In all, roughly 800,000 people died, their corpses collecting three times as quickly as did dead Jews in Nazi Europe.

Although this is the first time the inmates have heard the government's

plan for their fate, many seem distracted by simpler concerns. They lean on one another, forearms on knees, palms on foreheads, cheeks on shoulders—the world's biggest game of Twister. Hundreds wrap their shirts into turbans as cover from the alternating drizzle and equatorial sun. A baby screams until a prisoner pushes her shriveled left breast into its mouth. The kitchen at one end of the yard resembles a steel mill, pumping black smoke from its eight chimneys as dinner for 2,797 is prepared below. The cooks, wearing soft pink uniforms coated with soot, shout orders over the cacophony of rakes shoving hot coals, long wooden clubs beating maize flour into a rubbery paste, shovels scraping the sides of giant pots, and machetes splintering logs in quick, precise hacks.

The inmates can be trusted with machetes for the same reason that most peasants outside the prison gates can: although it was the main instrument of death during the genocide, the machete quickly reverted to its traditional status as a farm tool. Many in Rwanda would prefer to forget the machete's history, to let the genocide it

*Alan Zarembo writes frequently about Africa.*



elf slip into the murk of oblivion, but the new Tutsi-controlled government, which ousted the former Hutu leaders in July 1994, cannot allow this to happen, and so it has jammed 92,000 suspects into prisons throughout the country to rate each crime on a sliding scale of brutality. Most of the prisoners are rank-and-file Hutu peasants

47s against the rusty red prison gate to pass around a cigarette and are only half watching the thousands of suspected murderers but because of a much more ominous fact: the genocide was a nearly perfect crime. Proving that it happened is easy; even proving that certain people were involved is not hard; but pinpointing exactly who did

murder 200 Tutsis first, the man who crushed 900 people in a church with a bulldozer, and the teachers who killed their students. Where does a man who butchered five people, the same number as did the Manson family, rank on the Rwandan killing scale?

Take the case of Innocent Nseniyumva, a farmer in his mid-twenties, whose only extraordinary trait is that he confesses to his crime and does not recant—at least not during the first week after soldiers lock him in a military jail. Innocent rarely leaves the dark cell he shares with about twenty other men, and he hesitates when a soldier lets him out to talk with me. His splayed feet and narrow shoulders seem as unlikely as his name; as he speaks, he hugs his torso.

The number of Tutsis he slaughtered could have been many more than the two children he admits to. He can't remember if the victims



who were directed to kill their Tutsi neighbors by radio propaganda and given specific targets by local Hutu leaders. So the ministers are offering them a deal: admit to your sins and squeal on your accomplices and superiors in exchange for a sentence short of life in this brick-and-plastic slum. The ministers are political evangelists, trying to convince the throng below that the only way to heal Rwanda is to follow them, as if these microphones, these history lessons, and these neatly wrapped stacks of the new genocide plea-bargain law could methodically undo the insanity the country has inherited.

What the ministers never tell the prisoners, what is never transmitted through the thick black cable that snakes through the crowd to three loudspeakers set on a pickup-truck roof, is that they are worried. Not because their bodyguards have propped their AK-

what may be, without confessions and betrayals, impossible.

Now the new Tutsi-controlled government wants to save Rwanda with the same forces that perpetuated the slaughter, to sort out guilt and innocence with the same authority that allowed the old Hutu bosses to oversee the massacres of 1994. For the genocide was produced not by a culture of chaos but by one of controlled docility, in which pleasing one's superiors is reason enough for existence.

**W**hen has a killer gone too far? There were those who competed to



were boys or girls, only that they each must have been about six, siblings. For two weeks—or was it two months? he can't decide—he was part of the local mob. He enjoyed hunting Tutsis but was sorry to murder. He was ordered to do it, but not by anyone in particular.

Killing was a job. The local Hutu official had a list of victims, and each morning the peasants gathered with



then weapons—machetes for most, a homemade wooden club spiked with nails for Innocent. For the first week he only watched, he says, “like a child watching something his father is doing.” The killers drank at the bars they passed, went home for lunch, and resumed in the afternoons. His turn came when the crowd spotted the two children. They didn’t try to escape, he says, and didn’t scream until he sunk the nails into the side of one of their heads.



I ask the obvious question. “How could you kill children?”

“If you were there . . . Things were strange. I can’t find any way to explain it to you. Can you imagine the radio saying, ‘Go kill these people’? The message got to the local authorities. They mobilized the soldiers and the militias, and they were going to the villages getting civilians to kill people. We accepted. They said we were fighting for the country.”

“What would have happened if you’d refused to kill?”

He looks bewildered, tugging at the sleeves of his mangy red blazer. “Nobody refused.”

A man named Innocent murdered two six-year-old children—a piece of absurd horror that leads to another. In deciding his fate, prosecutors must determine whether Innocent’s malice was “excessive,” whether, under the new plea-bargain law the ministers

have been peddling, he qualifies as a “Category 1” killer, and therefore for the death penalty. The designation is reserved for the genocide’s leaders and their lieutenants—priests, local authorities, and militia members—“sexual torturers,” as well as “notorious murderers who by virtue of the zeal or excessive malice with which they committed atrocities, distinguished themselves in their areas of residence or where they passed.”

There are more than 90,000 Inno-

cents. And so it is that a mountain of Day-Glo folders, freshly shipped from prisons and still bound with twine, are piled on a chair in the waiting room outside the office of Emmanuel Rukangira, Kigali’s prosecutor. He spends much of his time sorting the files into stacks—stacks that decide life and death. Ranking brutality may seem surreal to outsiders, but to Rwandans, raised in a pecking-order culture, it makes perfect sense. Rukangira explains how one man became notorious for burying people alive, a method that automatically places him in Category 1.

“Is it worse to bury one person alive or kill ten people with a machete?” I ask Rukangira.

He smiles, as if he’s thought about this before. “With a machete, you can do it with one hack. To bury somebody alive, it takes him a long time to die. Sometimes they didn’t bury him

completely. They left him there alive and came back in a couple days with a stick to finish. Others killed pregnant women and cut the babies out of their wombs. That is a cruel way to kill. Category 1.”

Only about 2,000 Hutu suspected mass murderers will make the honor roll. The rest are Category 2, the common killers who will serve seven to eleven years if they confess before charges are brought, twelve to fifteen if they confess after, and life in prison if convicted without confessing. Category 3, those who maimed but did not kill, can get off with one third the penalties mandated in the standard criminal law. Category 4 includes those who looted the homes of the dead, crimes so relatively minor that Rwandans have been told to work out compensation plans among themselves.

But it is too soon to classify thousands of inmates. Before prosecutors can gauge malice, investigators must make files, and for files to be made each Hutu prisoner must first be identified. This is not easy. When the new Tutsi-led government seized power, thousands of suspects were denounced by neighbors, arrested by Tutsi soldiers, and locked up without record. Files were made later, often based solely on information the prisoners provided themselves. In some prisons, foreign aid has allowed the government to correct that sophistry with another inmates are now photographed in the hope that their accusers can provide their real names.

In Mbogo, forty miles north of Kigali, new arrestees line up at the door to investigator Ephrem Sikubwabo’s office, a concrete cubicle that reeks of sweat and fresh paint. Spiders have strung their webs across the metal bars on the windows; crumpled sheets of carbon paper spill out of a cardboard box onto the floor. Twenty-seven-year-old Sikubwabo sits behind a desk listening to a transistor radio while he hammers out interrogation transcripts on a manual typewriter. In an assembly line of denial, inmates enter one by one, sit, clench the sides of the wooden chair, and proclaim their innocence.

As long as they remain silent, the genocide will remain a collective ac-



When the Tutsi rebels first took power, it was common for Hutus to admit to—even boast of—their role in killing Tutsis. But behind prison walls the indoctrination has turned tactical. Now not only do most dispute their crimes but many deny that the genocide ever happened. Portraying themselves as victims of the Tutsis, the prisoners have taken on an unusual role for suspected killers: the spokesmen for due process.

**H**e who has done a bad thing must be punished," declares a chubby-cheeked inmate of the Cyangugu Central Prison. "But I don't understand why we must wait two or three years to be judged."

To reach him, I have had to follow two barefoot prisoners lugging an oil barrel full of beans down a corridor carpeted with an interlocking weave of outstretched prisoners, past men scrubbing plastic plates in the gray water that ripples through the gutters, and into a room dank with sweat and breath. Every prison has a hierarchy, and it soon becomes clear that I have been led to Cyangugu's City Hall—and that the inmate with the chubby cheeks, Théodore Munyangabe, No. 1,550 on the Category 1 list, is Boss.

Munyangabe's ward resembles a two-story chicken coop. A vent in the roof casts a strip of sunlight across the top roost, a plywood shelf where he sleeps in a row of twenty men. Twenty more sleep on the bottom shelf. As I watch a prisoner on the upper deck wash his feet in a bucket, another inmate shimmies out of the nine-foot crawl space beneath the bottom shelf, where yet another twenty sleep. Convincing a fellow inmate to sell his shelf space can cost more than \$100, nearly half of what most Rwandans earn in a year, so the poor fan out to sleep on the rafters, the cement floors, the corrugated-tin roofs, and the cardboard sheets that cover the pit latrines. They are used to the stench of shit.

"In every society there are some people who are better off than others," Munyangabe says with a shrug. He employs a teenage prisoner to wash his clothes and deliver his meals, and pays the boy in biscuits handed out by the Red Cross; another inmate cuts his



Our thanks to Otto and Jane Fore of Ohio; Roduner Daniel, Switzerland; Catherine Hook, Australia; Maïke Mennen and Frank L. Ullmann, Germany.

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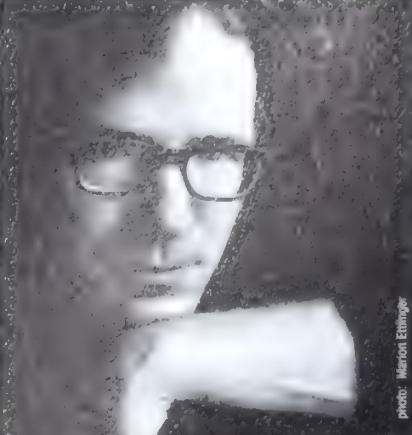
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hair. Testimony from these low-level prisoners would probably be enough evidence to convict men like Munyangabe, but I wonder whether Rwanda's new leaders will ever be able to convince them to rat out their bosses. Clearly, Munyangabe is doing his best to keep their lips sealed.

I ask him about the plea-bargain law. "If I am a murderer, the court must prove it. It is not [my job] to prove to the court that I am a murderer. If I had done something bad, I would tell it. It isn't easy to confess something you haven't done." I ask him if there was a genocide. "I can't be quite sure, but I think there are people who have done bad things."

Until he was arrested in March of 1995, Munyangabe, forty-two, was a deputy governor in Cyangugu Prefecture, tucked between Zaire and Burundi at the south end of Lake Kivu. His slight lisp, round face, and powder-blue shorts give him a boyish quality as he leans on a rafter and scoops maize paste into his mouth. "They say I have killed men. I don't know who. And I don't know who says so."

Munyangabe may never have touched a machete or fired a rifle, but in Rwanda guilt is inversely proportional to how low you are on the killing chain. Human-rights investigators believe that he led a massacre of hundreds at a church, then accompanied the governor to a nearby stadium where Tutsi men were herded into groups to be killed. Nearly a year later, Munyangabe caught word of his impending arrest and went to meet Jane Rasmussen, a United Nations human-rights monitor. They sat on the office porch for more than two hours; she took notes of their conversation. Yes, he drove grenades to the Cyimbogo church, where hundreds of Tutsis had taken refuge, but it was his driver who tossed the grenades inside. He thought about saving Tutsis instead of driving them to roadblocks manned by militiamen, but as a member of the government he really had no choice.

"He was not lying and shameful but pleased to present the story of himself as a good man trapped in a bad situation, who'd done the best he could," Rasmussen remembered. "I was thinking, why was he telling me all this?

Did he feel a need to confess? Did he want legal advice? This is the creepiest part: I think he really didn't understand anything he had done was wrong, legally or morally. It's the perfect example of how people's sense of right and wrong got turned around in the genocide."

Back in the Cyangugu prison the rain starts. Inmates string up tarps and rush to catch the runoff in buckets. A muscular man in red bikini underwear foams with soap lather, a crucifix swinging from his neck, as I head toward the prison's exit. The only guard left on duty padlocks the main gate and, after bidding me goodbye, heads home for the night.

The prison stands on a hilltop like a medieval fortress. I can hear the din of thousands of voices from behind the thirty-foot-high brick walls as my translator and I descend into the valley. Along the way he says, "You people are lucky—you *muzungus* [white people]. When there is something wrong you say it. You say, 'Fuck you.' But us, we play diplomacy. We are not open. We don't show everything."

"What do you mean?" I ask.

"I can smile at you, drink with you and eat with you—and have something bad against you. This evening can come and kill you, even though we were together today. Between Hutu and Tutsi there is always doubt."

He is a Hutu in his mid-twenties. I will call him Pierre. During the genocide he hid a Tutsi carpenter in his house. One day he returned home to find a mob in his front yard; they were cousins and neighbors, some of the same people we had just seen in the prison. "They said, 'There was a Tutsi in your house,' and I said, 'No.' And they said, 'Yes there was, and we killed him. Here he is.'" At their feet was the body, his skull dented, a gash across his neck. Pierre went inside and closed the door.

He says that most of the killers enjoyed their jobs, each day working different side of town, each night swilling beer and dining on the freshly butchered cows of dead Tutsis. I ask him how such celebration was possible.

"When somebody is your enemy, killing them is nice."

"Did you kill?"

"No."



"Why not?"  
 "I don't know why I wasn't interested. People were getting rich from . . . Those who were killing were boys and bandits. I had no reason to get more things. My father can feed me." Then he offers that he refused to feast on the fresh beef. "The same machete that killed a man killed a cow. I am eating the cow, so I am eating the man."  
 "Would you ever testify against the killers you saw?"  
 "Even if they arrest me and say, 'Tell us what you know,' I would not say anything."

"Why not?"

"It's not my job."

Anyone who saw mutilated bodies flicker across a television screen in the spring of 1994 might dismiss the genocide as yet another African tribal war unleashed in yet another lawless African state. Hutus make up 85 percent of the population; Tutsis, most of the rest. But the problem is that there is little consensus about whether Hutus and Tutsis can be allied tribes at all. Before colonialism, Rwanda was a highly organized

feudal kingdom. The overlords were Tutsis, but not all Tutsis were privileged. The two groups meet none of the standard conditions that define tribes; for centuries they have lived on the same hillsides, spoken the same language, shared the same burial customs, and intermarried.

The Belgians, masters of Rwanda and neighboring Burundi for four decades, tried to quantify the differences between Hutus and Tutsis. Belgian ethnologists claimed that the average Tutsi nose was 55.8 millimeters long and 38.7 millimeters wide, compared with Hutu dimensions of 52.4 and 43.2. Other dubious distinctions were based on property: those who owned fewer than ten cows were said to be Hutus; the rest, Tutsis. The colonial government issued each group identity cards and forced Hutus to work for free while Tutsis supervised. The first massacres in Rwanda erupted in 1959, when Hutus slaughtered Tutsis in order to consolidate power before the country's pending independence in 1962. Roving the hillsides in squads, they chased tens of thousands of Tutsis into exile, the

same Tutsis who would multiply in asylum, creating a generation of expatriates who would return to take power after the 1994 genocide.

Far from being another lawless African country, independent Rwanda became and remains a model of order. The country is divided into 12 prefectures, 154 communes, 1,600 sectors, and tens of thousands of cellules—a top-down network of officialdom rooted in a precolonial kingdom, codified by colonizers, and preserved after independence. Once Hutus had vanquished the Tutsi elite, it used the pre-existing social structure to exercise complete control over the populace. Residents had to ask permission to leave their hillsides. Everybody became a de facto member of the only political party, Hutu President-for-Life Juvenal Habyarimana's Mouvement Revolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRND). When opposition parties were legalized in 1991, MRND tacked "et la Démocratie" to its name, but nothing about Rwanda was very democratic. It was a nation of followers, a culture that foreign-aid donors be-

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heved contributed to progress: more than 60 percent of Rwandans were Catholics, a higher proportion than anywhere else in the continent; there was very little street crime; and peasants spent two days a month planting trees, terracing fields, and paving roads in a national service program called *umuganda*, which amounted to forced labor. The crews were called *Interhamwe*: those who work together.

Foreigners refused to see the bigger national project in the pipeline. They could have looked for clues in Burundi, where over the last three decades the Tutsi minority had kept their grip on power by periodically massacring Hutus, as many as 300,000 in 1972. Both countries have the same ethnic mix, but lacking the revolution that brought Hutus to power in Rwanda, Hutus in Burundi had grown so obedient to their Tutsi overlords that they dug their own graves and reported to police stations for their scheduled—and sometimes rescheduled—executions. Some twenty-two years later in Rwanda, it was Tutsis who would die, and this time it would be the civic duty of Hutus to kill them. The ideology of Tutsi extermination would flow down the hierarchy of command into virtually every home, the churches would fill with bodies, the terraced fields would become mass graves, Hutu soldiers would speed across the country on some of the best roads in Africa, pink identity cards would help determine who would live and who would die, and *Interhamwe* would refer to a new kind of work crew: not tree planters but militias made up of peasants and unemployed young men recruited from the ranks of ordinary Hutus on every hillside, the gangs that became the most notoriously brutal killers.

The seeds of genocide were planted in late 1990, shortly after the Rwandan Patriotic Front, a rebel army led by English-speaking Tutsi refugees, invaded from Uganda. Three years of fighting ended in a stalemate, forcing the MRND to sign a power-sharing agreement with the Tutsi RPF rebels. But the Hutu leaders delayed implementing the agreement, and extremists within the government began to enact a plan to exterminate not only all Tutsis but Hutu sympathizers as

well.<sup>1</sup> On April 6, 1994, President Habyarimana's plane was shot down—most likely by his own extremist Hutu allies—killing him and providing the pretext for the massacres.

Enlisting civilians to kill was a deliberate attempt by the ruling Hutus to create a society that Tutsis could never govern. And it may have worked. Although in 1994 the RPF defeated the Hutu army, stopped the genocide, and took power,<sup>2</sup> the only beneficiaries of their revolution so far have been the army officers who claimed hillside villas and the roughly 800,000 Tutsi refugees who returned from three decades in exile to replace the dead. The RPF set up a coalition government that blames tribal distinctions on colonialism and avoids using the words "Hutu" and "Tutsi," but few believe the pretense of kinship. Hutus in the government are figureheads; intermarriage has all but ceased; and Hutu extremists still kill Tutsi survivors and foreigners as part of ongoing attempts to destabilize the Tutsi-led government. Many of the estimated 6 million Hutus view their new bosses as a foreign army of occupation. Imagine the Jews picking up arms in 1945, taking over Germany, and then having to run the country.

But even this comparison falls short. At the height of the Holocaust in 1944, the Nazis executed about 400,000 over a three-month period, the same length of time it took Hutus to kill twice that many. If Nazis ran killing factories that most Germans never had to confront directly, Rwandans murdered intimately, spattering their clothes with the blood of their neighbors. A U.N.

<sup>1</sup> Extremists pushed an ideology known as *Hutu Power* via propaganda such as *Kinyaga*, a magazine that in 1990 published "The Hutu 10 Commandments," which warned Hutus not to intermarry, fraternize, or go into business with Tutsis. Commandment 8 states simply, "The Hutu should stop having mercy on the Tutsi." Commandment 10 proclaims that "the Hutu ideology must be taught to every Hutu at every level. . . . Any Hutu who persecutes his brother Hutu for having read, spread, and taught this ideology is a traitor."

<sup>2</sup> Ironically, the downfall of the Hutu regime may have been due to its dedication of men and resources to the genocide rather than to fighting the highly disciplined RPF, which forced the Hutu army and militias into exile in Zaire.

survey of more than 3,000 children after the war showed that 69.5 percent had watched murders or maimings, 78 percent had heard screams, and 16 percent had hidden under corpses. No body knows how many people actually took part in the slaughter, but without gas chambers and crematoria the number of executioners had to be far greater than in Germany.

Therein lies the dilemma. Can an ethnic minority control a country simply because of the evils perpetuated by the majority, no matter how awful? Is justice, or revenge, a solid enough foundation for a nation-state?

"There is no Republic of Genocide," one foreign diplomat tells me. I ask him what he means. "Genocide is the basis for the existence of this government. Arresting people is the only way it has to assert its authority."

The first time I visited Rwanda, the prison was October 1994, three months after the Tutsi rebels took power and not long after I arrived in Rwanda. I had lived in Africa as a college student and had written a thesis about why Uganda had sponsored the 1990 RPF invasion; back in the United States I couldn't understand why so many nice people half a world away were butchering their neighbors. So about the time that Americans were watching O. J. Simpson's Bronco ride, I quit my newspaper job, traded my rusting station wagon for a plane ticket, and convinced the warden to open the single padlock on the gate at the "1930" the Kigali central prison. The name refers to the number displayed above the door, which is the year the Belgians built the compound.

Back then, the prisons held about 6,000 inmates. By January of this year, my third in Rwanda, 92,392 people were stuffed into fifteen prisons and 183 local jails, some so packed that inmates must take turns sitting down. And just when the prisons seemed full, the army, as if conducting an experiment on claustrophobia, shoved more people—an average of 600 a week last year. By official admission, some of those jailed are innocents turned in by people who wanted their houses, cows, or fields—some sent of compensation for their dead relatives.



ives short of finding the real killers.

One Monday last October, in a Kibuye jail, a 15-by-12-foot cell held about seventy-seven inmates. They competed for air and light through three small windows. That night soldiers squeezed in forty-five more, bringing the density to about six people per square yard. The guards heard shouts and banging on the door, but refused to open it until the next morning. By then, sixteen were dead.

Such incidents are all too common, but the new government is faced with three grim and equally absurd options: ignore an atrocity, answer it in kind, or slowly sift through a mountain of individual brutalities, grading each one using methods that are at best terribly slow and at worst entirely arbitrary. One afternoon, returning from a prison with Gerald Gahima, the deputy justice minister, I told him how I once entered a reporter's lottery to watch the hanging of Westley Allen Dodd, who had killed three children in southwest Washington. Gahima responded, "Anybody who kills three babies deserves to die. He deserves more than death. But what do you do when everybody has killed three babies?"

The young judges stroll into the classroom in the town of Gitarama. None carries a briefcase or legal pad. Only three out of the fifty-odd men and a few women wear spectacles, though more probably need them. As they enter, a clerk tears open a brown envelope and passes out copies of the new plea-bargain law, printed in French, English, and the country's indigenous language, Kinyarwanda. The clerk paces down the aisles like a high school proctor, distributing notebooks and blue Bic pens. A throat clears when the judge in white patent-leather shoes saunters in fifteen minutes late.

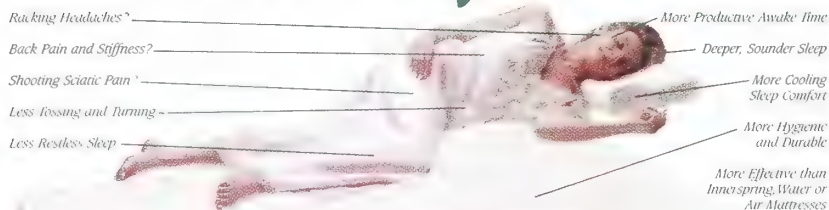
If the judges seem unseasoned, it is because most have no legal experience at all. More than 80 percent of the former judicial officials fled or were killed during the genocide; many participated in it. There are few left to help judge the 92,000 inmates who give Rwanda the distinction of imprisoning a higher percentage of its population than any other country in the world. In 1996, 46 Manhattan

judges heard 259 murder cases prepared by 600 prosecutors. As of January of this year, Rwanda had 201 judges, 132 prosecutors, and 157 investigators. Even if each of Rwanda's twelve genocide courts could try one case per day, the trials would continue for twenty-nine years. The government says it is too poor to hire defense attorneys, and the country's 33 private lawyers have expressed little interest in representing genocide suspects. Last year the justice minister was fired, though never prosecuted, for allegedly embezzling \$100,000 and trying to

clear her uncle of genocide charges.

The majority of the new judges are Tutsis with few memories of Rwanda. They either were born in exile or fled the country as children in 1959, returning to their homeland after the 1994 genocide had ended. Some of the judges are Hutus, and some are Tutsi genocide survivors like Sylvestre Bizimana, a towering thirty-one-year-old with a whispery monotone and a pewter Marlboro belt buckle. Before the war, his family ran variety shops in two towns. Three brothers, his father, and dozens of relatives were killed.

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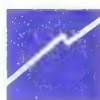
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"After the war, nothing was left," I says. "I wanted to serve my country."

Elsewhere, judges whose families were massacred may recuse themselves from hearing massacre cases. In Rwanda that is not an option, so Bizimira answered a radio advertisement. Applicants for judgeships had to be at least twenty-five, have a secondary school diploma, and be free from criminal convictions. Hundreds showed up for the hour-long test. Part One was an essay question worth twenty points: "In a democratic state, it is essential that a government not interfere in the decisions of judicial tribunals. Discuss." Part Two was a set of twenty questions, worth one point each. Here are some of them:

1. What is the capital of Canada?
2. The Hippocratic Oath is sworn by members of which profession?
8. Jean-Paul Sartre is author of:
  - a) *The Second Sex*
  - b) *The Outsider*
  - c) *Being and Nothingness*
13. The chemical symbol for sodium is:
  - a) Na
  - b) Cl
  - c) So
14. Humans first landed on the moon in:
  - a) 1969
  - b) 1970
  - c) 1972
15. The president of the Supreme Court of Rwanda is:
16. Croatia was formerly part of:
  - a) the Soviet Union
  - b) Czechoslovakia
  - c) Yugoslavia
17. The cornea is found:
  - a) in the eye
  - b) in the heart
  - c) on the foot
19. The author of *The Republic* is:
  - a) Plato
  - b) Aristotle
  - c) Euripides
20. "Extradition" means:
  - a) to convict someone twice for the same offense
  - b) to convict someone in his or her absence
  - c) to remove a person to a country where he or she is accused of a serious offense

The top scorers won a four-month course on Rwandan law and an \$88-month job. Today is their final classroom lesson before they take the bench to judge genocide defendants. The le



is on the new plea-bargain law. "I didn't write the law. I've only been asked to teach it," an appeals-court prosecutor says before instructing the judges to open their copies to page 10. His disclaimer is understandable. The law has spurred a divisive political debate. Punishments must be stiff enough to satisfy genocide survivors' craving for justice, but light enough that prisoners have an incentive to confess. Many survivors believe that execution is the only suitable punishment for the killers, even for children who followed the example of their parents. Other opponents say that the courts will become so clogged that eventually innocents will make up the confessions; otherwise they could easily spend more than fifteen years—the maximum sentence for admitted Category 2 killers—awaiting trial.

Larger fears loom over Kigali authorities. What will the world think if they start executing the guilty en masse? Will the sentences incite Hutu prisoners—and, more importantly, fugitive militants—to further violence? Can the government safely free the innocent after their trials and the guilty after they serve their sentences? The Ugandan-raised health minister, Colonel Joseph Karemera, tells me, "We can't release prisoners until we brainwash the population to accept them."

Clutching a pen and notebook between his handcuffed palms, Deogras Bizimana hops off the tailgate of a pickup truck at gunpoint. Rwandan cameramen shove boom microphones in his face as he enters the courtroom in the eastern town of Kibungo on December 27. The audience of several hundred claps vigorously as the prosecutor reads the charges, a catalogue of evil that qualifies Deo for Category 1: leading gangs of killers, carrying a machine gun, theft, doing nothing to help people in danger. Children gather on the window ledges outside, clinging to the wall as they peer in at the thirteen-year-old suspect standing at the bench in his baggy prison shorts and rubber flip-flops. He is the first genocide suspect to be tried in Rwanda.

Before him, three stone-faced judges sit at a table draped with the Rwandan flag, dressed in black robes piped with red and blue, hearing the first crim-

inal case of their lives. All three grew up in Zaire, where one was a teacher, another studied banking, and the third got a business degree.

The trial lasts about four hours, with more than a quarter of the time taken up by a debate between Deo and the judges over whether he will be allowed to speak French. The judges decide that since most of the crowd understands only Kinyarwanda, he must speak it too, even though French is one of Rwanda's three national languages. A Rwandan radio journalist leans over to me to joke, "He must have used the machete in French."

Deo has no defense attorney and was given only Christmas Day to review his file. Although the families of the dead have lined up to stake claim to the defendants' belongings, the closest Deo comes to confronting his accusers—whose statements are read by prosecutors, not presented in person—is when a man in the audience rises to show the machete scars on his neck and scalp, then holds up his right hand to display the stubs of three missing fingers. Deo tries to defend himself with logic, refuting an accusation that he once stood up in a crowded tavern and beckoned Hutus to kill all Tutsis, including those present.

"If the witness was a Tutsi in the bar, and he is still alive, how did he come to know that statement?" Deo asks amid laughter from the crowd, as if he had said that the goat ate his homework. The prosecutor retorts: "[Deo] seems to be saying that the only witnesses are those he killed."

That may be true, and the irony of it all strikes me. If the old regime had succeeded in killing all the Tutsis, there would be no trials, no memories, no political dilemmas. Genocide, according to international law, is defined as "acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group"; the closer you come to destroying the whole, the fewer witnesses are left behind, and the harder genocide is to prove. A week later, such paradoxes don't prevent the young judges from sentencing Deo to death. As the pick-up pulls away to take him back to prison, he vows to appeal, a process that could delay his execution by a few months at best.

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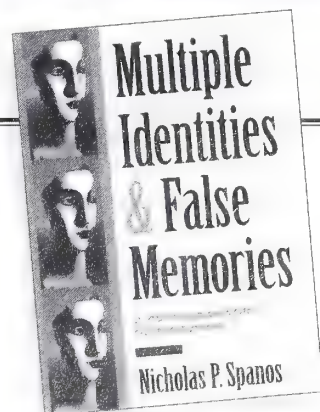


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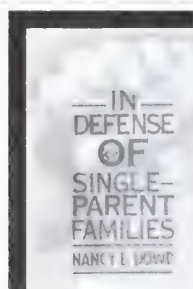
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Was justice served? Hours after the sentencing, back in Deo's village, his Tutsi neighbors tell me yes. His Hutu neighbors say maybe not. One woman who listened to the proceedings on the radio stops short of calling him innocent but says that some details presented in court were wrong. She nervously looks around for the Tutsi spies she fears may be hiding in her bushes before saying that investigators never questioned her and that many Hutus are too afraid even to attend court, let alone present evidence to contradict the prosecution.

If this was the first trial—presumably among the strongest cases—I wonder what trial number 4,156, or number 33,372, will be like.

Rwandan officials make no apology for imprecise justice. They say that meeting Western standards would mean freeing large numbers of killers for lack of witnesses or due to legal loopholes, which would be disastrous for a government that derives its legitimacy from the wrongs of the old regime. The alternative may be executing some innocents, but officials say that it is hypocritical for the world to criticize Rwandan justice when, as of February 1997, the U.N. international tribunal set up in Arusha, Tanzania, to punish the masterminds of the Rwandan genocide has yet to convict anyone.<sup>3</sup>

Hamstrung by mismanagement and bureaucracy, the Arusha tribunal is the scorn of Rwanda, in part for not using the death penalty. The chief prosecutor

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the tribunal workers seem too busy conducting bizarre experiments in cultural relevancy to concern themselves with justice. In September 1996, a week before the first trial started in Arusha, only to be delayed for months, tribunal member Gregory Gordon was onstage playing Hamlet in a production cosponsored by the United States Information Agency. The program noted that Gordon, "when not engaged in theatrical activities, is helping to prosecute war criminals for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda." Other tribunal employees played the King, Queen, Horatio, and Laertes; the USIA flew in a drama consultant from Chicago. Comparing the Danish prince's existential crisis to the genocide, the director, who also played Horatio, billed the play as a form of national therapy, telling one reporter, "What the play is actually about is to speak the truth about what happened here, about ambition and corruption gone awry." On opening night in Kigali there were no more than three Rwandans in the audience.

until September 1996—Richard Go stone—also headed the Yugoslavi tribunal, and in nearly two years spent just seven days in Rwanda. Most genocide planners continue to live comfortably in exile. The tribunal did indict Colonel Theoneste Bagosora, a t army officer believed to be among t Hutu inner circle. He was originally rested in Cameroon, not for killing Rwandans but for the murders of t Belgian U.N. peacekeepers in Kigali.

The executions of the Belgians were a calculated attempt on the part of Hutu extremists to make the world turn away so that the genocide could continue unimpeded. It worked. The Genocide Convention, signed by dozens of nations after World War II, proved futile when the United States, wary of another Somalia, dodged its international obligation—leading other countries to do the same—by refusing to use the term "genocide" in public until the 1994 massacres were nearly over. The U.N. force was reduced to a skeletal crew as soon as it evacuated foreigners, leaving Rwandans, including those who worked for the U.N., foreign governments, and aid organizations—behind to die.

One of those left behind was Bonaventure Niyibizi, the top Rwandan working for the United States Agency for International Development in Kigali. He smiles wanly as he tells in an unbroken voice the story of his mother's three-day execution: the killers sliced her Achilles tendon the first day, hacked off her legs the next, and finally returned to toss her body in the river. He attributes his own survival to sheer luck.

A year after the genocide, Niyibizi was invited to the U.S. State Department auditorium in Washington to accept an award, which he guessed wrongly—was "foreign employee of the year." When he was called to the podium, the head of USAID, Brian Atwood, handed him a wood-and-bronze plaque, and the audience applauded. The inscription read: "A recognition to USAID/Kigali for working together in a situation of great peril to make and implement decisions resulting in the safe evacuation of the entire American mission staff." It was USAID's congratulations to its Rwandan employees for saving their American



in co-workers. A copy of the citation is sent to each one, even to the fifteen who had been killed.

Back in Kigali, Niyibizi mounted the plaque next to his door. "I am keeping it in my office," he tells me, "not because I'm proud of it, not because I deserve it, but to remember how we have no value."

Hope for a lasting peace is fragile and requires a national consensus on a fair administration of justice. But Rwanda's 800,000 victims and 92,000 survivors form an elaborate puzzle of confusion in which each piece stubbornly refuses to fit its obvious match. In a hilltop in Mbogo, I meet Odette Mukandekazi, a Hutu woman who denounced Athanase Mujyambere, a prisoner in the "1930," for killing her Tutu husband. She thinks she is thirty-two. A deep scar emerges from her left ear, runs across her forehead, and curves down into her right eyelid. A gray cardigan is draped over her shoulders, hiding the fact that her left forearm is gone, and as she speaks, she rubs her right thumb over the stubs of her index and middle fingers, severed at the knuckles with a machete by a neighbor who attacked her in April 1993 for being "a friend of Tutsis." That year, the government was sponsoring small-scale massacres in what amounted to a practice run for the genocide. One year after being brutalized, she watched Mujyambere order a mob to exterminate hundreds of Tutsis gathered in a church. "I remember Mujyambere saying to the others, 'These are snakes, let us kill them,'" she tells me. "I can't tell you who did what, only that when he decided to kill, they started with machetes and guns. There were lots of people. I don't even remember their names. Mujyambere was the chief, in charge of making sure nobody was missed." I return to the "1930" to confront Mujyambere with her accusation and ask whether he thinks it is fair that prosecutors have put him in Category A. More than 8,000 suspected murderers are packed into a space built for 100. Like most Rwandan prisons, the "1930" is run by the inmates. In the United States this would be a recipe for chaos, but the opposite is true in Rwanda. There are few escape attempts, and violence is rare. The orderliness of

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Rwanda's sector has been replicated in the prisons and color-coded. Inmates with money and stature have had the pink prison-uniform fabric fashioned into double-breasted suits and trench-coats. The poor hang bundles of their ragged clothes from the rafters like carcasses in a butcher's freezer. Those at the top of the hierarchy wear royal blue baseball caps, each labeled "capita" and numbered 1 to 12—these are the captains of each of the twelve wards. Other colors denote health workers and Red Cross assistants. Yellow berets perched on their heads, the inmates in charge of security look like Boy Scouts, but slightly sadistic ones; they herd their fellow prisoners by swatting them with long sticks.

Several yellow berets greet me inside the "1930" gate. As if part of a performance artist's critique on authority, one carries a toy pistol, holster, and walkie-talkie, all made of tinfoil; another has fashioned a badge out of a Michael Jackson photograph and pinned it to the front of his hat. They fetch Mujyambere while I take a tour, stepping over potholes, passing a neatly dressed man peering into a small mirror while he trims his chin whiskers. Four men draw a diagram of a gasoline engine. Nearby a man irons uniforms while a teacher quotes Mao, comparing China's cultural revolution to the 1959 uprising of Hutus in Rwanda. Within the compound are Bible-study classes and computer courses using keyboards drawn on cardboard. The less industrious prisoners sit in plastic hovels smoking cigarettes and playing cards.

Suddenly a stooped man with specks of white hair on the sides of his shiny head and curly tufts growing out of his ears is delivered to me. Scrawny legs poke out of his pink Bermuda shorts. He wears a fuzzy blazer over his uniform, ornamented with a strand of rosary beads and a medallion of the Virgin Mary. "Mujyambere," a yellow beret announces.

He speaks only Kinyarwanda, no French. He says that he is sixty-one, and that he opposed his son's decision to join the Hutu army during the genocide because "he could have been killed." Mujyambere says that he was not especially close to the authorities on his hillside, as he had retired from the government years ago. When I ask him

what he was doing during the spring of 1994, he says that he stayed on his farm.

"I didn't see anybody dying. I didn't see anything. No bodies. Nothing. In our sector, the Tutsis fled. The military chased them to kill them. It was only the young people. The old people didn't join in the killings."

"Why are you here?"

"They say I have killed some people, but I didn't."

He claims that Mukandekazi, her children, and another neighbor denounced him in September of 1994 so that they could steal his five cows. I ask for more details. He says that she is a Hutu and that her husband, who may have been a Tutsi, died in the war. He doesn't know the circumstances. He

makes no mention of the missing forearm.

**I**n a church in Kanzenze, twenty miles from the capital, loose dirt and cobwebs coat hundreds of garbage bags filled with skeletons collected from the pews and the countryside. The polyurethane stretches over skulls and rib cages; a few tibias pierce through. Gaspard Musonera, a Tutsi whose smooth face and slight build make him look younger than his thirty-two years, says that somewhere in the bags are pieces of his parents, three brothers, and one sister. He survived because he fled north to join the rebels. A year after taking power, the Tutsis appointed him mayor.

Some Hutu prisoners have pledged their loyalty to their new mayor, who says, "When I ask them why they killed, they say, 'Because the government told us to. And since you are the authority now, we would do it for you too.'"

**Y**ou too might obey orders to kill even if you believed killing was morally wrong—for example, to save your own life. That is not what happened in Rwanda. The genocide happened so swiftly, with so little internal resistance, that there was no time for a national moral dilemma. Some killers proved themselves equally capable of good and evil, hiding Tutsis by night, butchering them by day. The genocide had less to do with whether ordinary Hutus believed killing their Tutsi neighbors was a good idea than with upholding the

standards of good citizenship, which in the spring and early summer of 1994 was to kill Tutsis in broad daylight. Ironically, such civic devotion may be the only chance for healing Rwanda. The idea is less absurd, and more hopeful, than is the fatalistic myth of Rwandans as a people forever condemned to follow feral impulses.

"The culture of obedience was a reaction to oppression. You have to respect a dictator," says Colonel Kamukama, wild-eyed and grinning. "We are lucky to have this culture. It can make people do bad things, but it can also make them walk ten kilometers to make bricks to build homes. They respect whoever is ruling them."

Last May, Hutu militants based in Zaire crossed the border to attack jail in Cyangugu, freeing about eight genocide suspects. Over the next few days, more than twenty returned and checked themselves back in. When asked why they would give up freedom to spend years waiting for trial at a victor's court, their responses sound almost rehearsed and have little to do with repentance.

"We must obey the law," they say.

The answer seems ridiculous given the scale of killing in Rwanda, but it makes a certain sense. It is the reason why few genocide survivors have sought revenge, why pedestrians stand at attention and rush-hour traffic slows when the Rwandan flag is raised and lowered, why the once bloody churches fill up again every Sunday, why Rwandans still come by the thousands when the government radio announces *umuganda* workdays, why genocide suspects are allowed to use machetes, why some prison fences are made of eucalyptus branches, and why inmates applaud for the government ministers who imprisoned them.

The "law" that the returned prisoners are talking about is not a permanent set of ethics written in the Rwandan criminal code or the Bible, but the directives of whoever is currently in power. And in that sense, Rwandans are among the most law-abiding citizens in the world. The genocide was not an eruption of tribalism but the rote conduct of a society raised on reverence for even the most wicked leaders. Killing was the law, and Rwandans followed it.



# TWO BOYS

By Padgett Powell

Once upon a time there were two boys. They were not boys anymore, actually, one forty-something and one nearly forty years old, but they were not stationed properly in Life as were men their age, and they were not going to be properly stationed in Life. They were not going to be bank presidents or lawyers or own car dealerships. One of them had once momentarily seemed properly stationed in Life for a man of his age; he had been a book editor. But he got into an affair with the editor in chief, under whom he worked, and she was the wife of a gangster who regularly employed the services of hit men, and this, his affair, was a very boyish thing to do. So when the editor resigned and ran, or ran and resigned there-  
 boy, he was properly a boy again on the street. He felt better all in all about resuming his true identity except that the stress of having pretended not to be a boy

with a gangster's wife who herself knew some of the hit men her husband used had given him cancer of the eyeball. It was his right eye.



The boy with the bad eyeball went through normal hoops trying to not have cancer of the eyeball, second-opinion surfing through waves of options and percentages and knives—

—Not knives, lasers! Why, hold on to that eyeball, in a few years we could save it, if it don't kill you tomorrow—

—It will—  
 —No, it won't—  
 —and then he got done with normal white-coat hoops and rag-bond letterhead and he emerged into a little dungeon where a Chinese woman who spoke only Chinese got ahold of him. "Eye poison in," said the translator he had to take with him. The translator cost more than the Chinese woman who knew how to use the needles and squeeze the earlobes. On the fifth or so visit, well after a man properly stationed in Life would have desisted this quackery, the Chinese woman got down on her knees and thumb-wrestled the boy's earlobe with more than customary vigor and the boy felt what felt like a cord twinging in his head from his ear to the eye in question and then some black

stuff began to ooze from the eye in question. "Eye poison out," the translator said, standing at a good remove. The boy was in a marvel of something like not despair. Despair had been when \$200,000 worth of lasers and trips to Sloan-Kettering and having a radioactive ingot strapped to his eye in a dark solitary cell for

Padgett Powell's new collection of stories, *Aliens of Affection*, will be published this fall by Henry Holt. His last article for *Harper's Magazine*, "Grappling with a Giant," appeared in the July 1996 issue.



two weeks—and chicken nouse—had produced only thin bones and hair loss and more cream—and gotten white coats and good opinions and letterhead. For \$20, black poison had come out of his eye of its own volition. This was more like it, to a boy. When you have an eyeball that is going to kill you, everything is like unto a boy again. Things begin to make original and final sense again, as they did in the beginning before you grew up and got confused. Or got half confused, as it is proper to say of the forty-year-old boy who has resisted bank presidency. It would be a good thing, for example, after poison has come out of your eye, to go into your tree house and have a meal of chocolate milk and bologna sandwiches and maybe see a good bird.

**T**he other boy, who was a bit older, had also gotten himself tenuously properly stationed in Life for a man of his age, and was also suffering for it. He was a college teacher, a position that is not merely proper but that presumes to look askance at, if not down upon, car dealers and lawyers and bank presidents, but maybe not book editors. The college-teacher boy could not identify what was wrong with him but felt it was something like the other boy's bad eyeball, though larger and vaguer, and he felt it was caused by the same tensions—the strain of posing as a man properly stationed in Life—that had caused the bad eyeball. There was one other link between the two boys: the college-teacher boy's wife was having an affair. She was not having it with a book editor but with a rug merchant. The college-teacher boy wanted to go with the bad-eyeball boy to the dungeon and tell the Chinese woman to make the rugmaker ooze out of his mind, if that's where he was. He was prepared for the Chinese woman to tell him the rugmaker was somewhere else, he didn't care. If she said "Rugmaker in toe" it would be all right as long as she got after the toe. He was prepared to believe in any needles, any herbs, any grains, any tinctures, any thumbholds, any toeholds, any

theretofore mystical nonempirical hogwash at all if it would make the rugmaker ooze away back onto the Anatolian plains where he had frolicked with the college-teacher boy's wife and where he belonged. "She says all trauma is cellular-deep," the boy with the bad eyeball told the college-teacher boy. That would have sounded like an exaggeration in the direction of preciousness to the college-teacher boy before he had begun to have a rugmaker inhabit him. Now it did not sound like hyperbole. It sounded like common goddamn sense.

He felt a little sheepish approaching the Chinese woman with the boy who had an actual bad eyeball when all he had was at most a bad heart or bad head. But the bad-eyeball boy could not see out of his eye, and the college-teacher boy could not think with his head, which rather throbbed, or hummed, but did not run. The bad-eyeball boy said, "Come on," so they went to the dungeon. If there is anything better than a tree house with chocolate milk and bologna in it, it is an underground fort with a weird woman in it.

**O**n their way to the dungeon, the boys stopped to eat. They liked to eat, and they knew a third boy who was also refusing a proper station in Life, though this third boy was not yet in their league as far as absolute dereliction went. But he had forsaken a business-management career for a term in the Culinary Institute of America, which allowed him to say "CIA" once or twice a day, and which allowed him to wear a tall hat and call himself a chef and serve food nobody had ever heard of. On the way to the dungeon the two boys had a turkey and onion confit sandwich, chicken sate with yogurt and cumin and turmeric and garlic, a Black Angus tenderloin with an anchiote-seed salsa, and some White Russian ice cream—advanced tree-house food. It fortified them for the underground. If untoward things happened to either of them in the dungeon at the hands of the Chinese woman, they would not prove faint

from want of nourishment. In this—eating well and cleaning the plates—they were being quintessentially good boys. They had both figured out, in fact, that it was only the territory of eating that what was approved of in the behavior of a boy was approved of still in the behavior of a man. They knew women who tolerated obesity because it was a function of, and an unfortunate evil extension to, the higher god of, a hearty appetite. A fat guy who cleans his plate was not merely a fat guy. Much of Life came down, in fact, they had discovered, to divining what women expected of you and allowed of you in order to stay thick of you as a good boy. The bad-eyeball boy said that the Chinese woman was in this sense a kind of purist, if not goddess.

"It's freaky," he said as they downed the last of their onion confit—they could not figure out what "confit" meant, exactly, but they ate everything—and anchiote salsa. "She takes one look at you and you see her thinking, You have been bad. You have no eat rice I told you. You have not stare at forest. But she do not ask or say anything. She know. It's as if her whole being is attuned to your misbehavior—"

"Well, that is sort of her job, right? She sticks needles into the Kewpie doll of your bad ways. She's the Wendy."

"She's beautiful, man."

"Let's go."

"Put on your Easter suit. You are going to church with your mother."

The college-teacher boy thought this a remarkably bright note to come out of the horn of a boy with an eyeball as seriously bad as the bad-eyeball boy's eyeball was bad. A note of great cheer from a possibly dying man. He was seized by great happy expectation himself. He had no Easter suit, but he took the bad-eyeball boy's meaning at once, got a haircut and polished his shoes and looked altogether spiffy for their appearance at the dungeon. He had a cottonmouthed shortness of breath, which he could not remember having since taking off his girls in high school alleged to be willing who weren't.



But the prospect of the dungeon as not sexual so much as it was anal; he regarded the Chinese woman—for reasons not clear to him—as a maternal warden who was going to correct him with benign but on authority. He thought he could have used this kind of correction as a young man, at which time the military would have been indicated; now he was older, more ruined, less regret, more of a slob when you got right down to it, and the therapeutic forces to right him would have to be subtler than boot camp. He had been a long time away from good mothering. He could not wait. The opportunity to have a good mother who was not your own and who was an expert she could restore you to yourself seemed too good to be true, and in knowing that it was, the college-teacher boy lowered his expectations, or was prepared to, so that whatever she was, as long as she was honest and weird and deft with the needles and the earlobe wringing, he was going to be true enough.

True enough: he was entering The Great Relativity Period of his life. It is the kind of period that if you entered it early you properly stationed yourself, a man, in Life. From the entrance of your law offices or your lawroom floor, later, you had no occasion or call to go visit a Chinese woman in a dungeon. If you entered the Great Relativity Period late in life, and suddenly accepted or even embraced theretofore unacceptable ymoric notions such as Relative Truth, then you looked even more like a boy than you had, proved yourself even less adept at inhabiting law offices (except as a client, per se), and had great occasion and call to visit Chinese women in dungeons. The college-teacher boy felt that if he were going to his prom, which he had of course as an inveterate boy not gone to in his time, this was the ur-prom, it felt like, and he had the ur-date: the head aperson herself, the great wise corrector. It wasn't black-tie, it was black poison. There was no Purple sus to drink in the parking lot; there was green tea to drink in the room. There were no expensive corages to pin on girls who did not like

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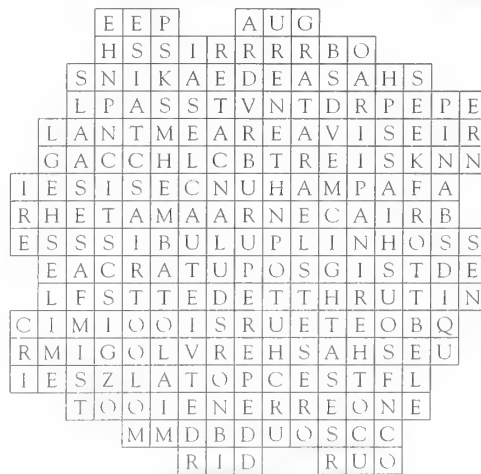
### NOTES FOR "DRESSED TO THE NINES—III"

Note: Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (\*)

1. sheep's-kin; 2. rear-guard; 3. as(teris\*)ks; 4. star-board; 5. plantains\*; 6. (v)-ener(v)ated; 7. p-hari\*-sees; 8. match-less, pun; 9. adv(E.R.-)tent; 10. innkeeper, pun; 11. analgesic\*; 12. (E.)carb(rev.)-uncle; 13. I.-M.P.-ass-I've; 14. sc-hematic; 15. heart-burn; 16. Fair-banks; 17. he'(iresse)s; 18. ambulance\*; 19. camp-a-Nile; 20. staircase\*; 21. U.N.-pop(U)lar; 22. historian\*; 23. ATT-rib-Ute; 24. S.-to-plight; 25. dottiness, pun; 26. fac(t)-simile; 27. dis(re)pute; 28. righteous\*; 29. o-to-lo-gist; 30. usheret-t(h)e; 31. rerouting, hidden; 32. Mimi-cries; 33. viola-tors\*; 34. aesthetes\*; 35. zoologist\*; 36. perch(er)-on; 37. unthreads\*; 38. I'm-mo(late)d; 39. re-sources\*; 40. bed-ridden; 41. senseless, pun.

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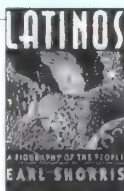
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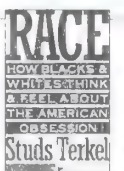
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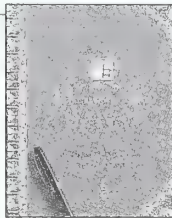


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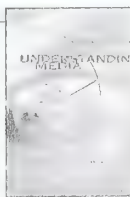
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you. There was a woman going to put pins in your ear who maybe did like you. Things had, withal, improved. The silly prom had become—for the bad-eyeball boy at least, and the college-teacher boy felt there was something deeply (cellular-deep) awry in himself as well—a not so silly dance of life.

**T**he dungeon was not below grade but it was unofficial enough to count as rebel ground—it was a fort. The Chinese woman was in Western clothes, which made her seem more uncomfortable and more menacing than she would have been in a kimono, if kimono is the right term—it occurred to the college-teacher boy he didn't know one thing Asian from another, not a people or a dress. She reminded him somehow of a horse jockey.

She greeted them and promptly set to on the bad-eyeball boy, putting a knee in the small of his back and lightly striking the back of his head with a ruler for about a half hour. Ordinarily there would have been joking between the boys, but here there was not. It was a profanation even to boys to make fun of a woman looking like a horse jockey hitting one of you with a stick, seriously purporting to rid you of cancer thereby. It was so preposterous that it could not be a trick, could not be merely a woman hitting a boy with a stick. So they watched and felt the Chinese woman beat the bad-eyeball boy with her bamboo-looking splint until the college-teacher boy had time to reflect how similar this business was to a certain boyhood torture called the redbelly, and to notice odd stains on the cheap carpet and not want to allow himself to reflect further on odd stains on the carpet where women redbellied men in the head with a stick, and the Chinese woman was saying something soothing and low with a demonstrative note in it, and in the bad-eyeball boy's ear that was facing up was a black ooze. It was not unlike but considerably less funny than the oil that bubbled up out of the ground when Buddy Ebsen as Jed Clampett shot his land in Appalachia and became a millionaire in Beverly Hills.

*An' up thru the ground come a bubblin' crude!* The college-teacher boy was resolutely calmly terrified and sat there resolutely calm to disprove it.

He thought the matter was just beginning, that the ooze would require now a more involved and protracted dealing with the emergency of its emergence, but he was wrong. The woman handed the bad-eyeball boy a tissue and let him up and turned to the college-teacher boy and said, "You." Then she waited. The college-teacher boy looked to the bad-eyeball boy for help, but the bad-eyeball boy merely twisted the tissue in his ear and shrugged.

The college-teacher boy felt eminently foolish and he felt if he talked down to this woman he would deserve to feel foolish so he let her have it: "My wife is obsessed with another man. She has not become his lover yet, but does not conceal that she would like to. I have offered to facilitate that and get out of the way, but she says no. She dreams about him and writes to him and writes about him. He writes to her. I stand around in the lee of L.U.V. I am not entirely clean. I have hurt my wife similarly, maybe worse. I am due some punishment. I am not a good boy." He looked at the bad-eyeball boy to see if this played any better than it sounded, and the bad-eyeball boy, who was examining his tissue, gave him a thumbs-up, so he continued.

"She can have the son of a bitch—he's a 'man of principle' and tall and dark and strange and handsome, and I am none of these, as you can see—" The Chinese woman here blinked very slowly and looked directly at the college-teacher boy, a perfectly inscrutable blink that said either "This is true" or "No, this is not true." He waited for her to intrude with her meaning and she did not. Of course she did not. They had come looking for a good mother, and they had by God *found* one. The bad-eyeball boy had stretched out on the floor for a nap.

"I do not care if the man is in my wife's life. She should have that. Fifteen years of only me is enough for anyone. But I want him *out of mine*. I want this Turk out of my head. He

is in it constantly, every waking moment, not in every sleeping moment only because I am too disturbed dream, I never dream, I would like dream, if my wife can dream I might deserve to dream myself." The bad-eyeball boy opened one of his eyes and looked at the college-teacher boy as if to comment on the excessiveness of this last speech, and fact the college-teacher boy had making it lost some of his resolute calm. He was nervous that in his silliness he had put the woman in perfect position to do the perfectly prototypically mothering thing: "Grow up!"—and for this he need not have come down to the dungeon and witnessed an ear-blackening head redbelly or anything else.

The Chinese woman had unwrapped a cloth roll of needles and showed the college-teacher boy to chair. The last thing the college-teacher boy managed to say, wincing at the roll of needles and allowing the Chinese woman to rather roughly push him into the chair, was "I need a *doctor*." This elicited another thumbs-up from the bad-eyeball boy, who opened neither eye.

The Chinese woman firmly held both the college-teacher boy's shoulders against the back of the straight chair and then released him with a slow, cautionary withdrawing as if instructing a dog to stay. He stayed. She put one of the needles in her mouth and sat on his lap. He glanced at the bad-eyeball boy, who was apparently asleep. With the needle still in her mouth, the Chinese woman began to trace the contour of the college-teacher boy's face. The needle was so sharp that despite the woman's fine touch the college-teacher boy was certain he would have hairline cuts from the tracing and look like an old china doll when this was over, and coupled with sexual nervousness that the woman sitting on his lap engendered, he giggled, which he thought would evoke a reproof from the woman, but it did not. She smiled, holding the needle with her teeth to do so, and said "Git." The college-teacher boy took this to mean "Good."

With the needle the Chinese woman drew large lines and small



he swept, swirled, looped, dawdled, doddled. She worked his face with the point of the needle with such attention to surface that the college-teacher boy, already in a transport of erotic tenderness, could only think the way he'd once seen overbred eagles work rough terrain for rabbits in a field trial. The dogs were so meticulous, sniffing every pad print of the rabbits, that they made virtually no forward progress. The "best" dog in this venture was the one necessarily the furthest behind his prey. This kind of field trial, in which the game was forsaken for a process itself, was happening on his face.

His face felt sweetly and wonderfully on fire, as if he were bleeding ears. She went on and on. She walked the needle in a crenellation between and around his very eyelashes with such dexterity that he did not squint. She departed for an ear and he stole a glance at the bad-eyeball boy, who was looking at him with one eye, then the other. He could not recall which of the bad-eyeball boy's eyes was bad, and neither of them looked worse than the other, and there was a tired smile on the bad-eyeball boy's face that suggested he didn't know which eye was bad, or care either. They had come to a fort with a weird woman in it, and it had worked. The Chinese woman worked the needle from pore to pore in a way that stung now so mildly and agreeably that the college-teacher boy began to wave, in a vision, to his wife. He began to look at the skin of the Chinese woman. He was excited where she was sitting on him but she acknowledged nothing in this respect. She slowly pulled back and away with the same doggy order as before and put the needle back in its roll carefully. The college-teacher boy sat breathing easily, bright, alive, bleeding and weeping without bleeding or weeping, waving happily to his dimming wife, who was diminishing—it was the way things went. His wife had said of her forgettable time with her Turk, "It is light, delightful, without promises." But the Turk had kissed her, and there was promise inherent in a kiss, and the Turk would break it, as the college-teacher boy, had. He

was going to get out of the way of the bull and let the bull break his promise. Without any means of applying those long colorful barbed darts he could never remember the name of, or of otherwise bleeding the full hump of the bull's exotic lust, there was nothing to do but quit the arena. Capework was silly. The Chinese woman shifted and was suddenly at his ear with warm breath. She nipped one lobe and crossed before him, brushing him with her hair, which looked fine and black but felt as coarse as broom straw on his face, and nipped the other lobe. She exhaled a long, hot, slow breath in his ear. The college-teacher boy had begun to hold her, to hug her, with what little purchase he had, sitting back as he was. She made no protest or adjustment. He held her still, aware now that he was holding her. She let another hot breath into his ear. Then she said, "You fine."

And he was. ■

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You deserve a factual look at...

## Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") Can Israel survive without it?

With the "peace agreement" between Israel and the PLO, the Middle East and Israel have entered a new phase. It will inevitably lead to the creation of a Palestinian state. Can Israel survive this dismemberment? Is it in the best interest of the United States?

### What are the facts?

**The Root of the conflict.** The conflict between Israel and the Arabs is not about borders and not about the Palestinians. It is about Israel's very existence. The PLO still adheres to its infamous "phased plan." It calls for first creating a Palestinian state on any territory vacated by Israel and then using that state to foment a final allied Arab assault against the truncated Jewish state.

**The Importance of territory.** Many believe that in this age of missiles, territory is of little importance. But this is not the case. The Arab states have acquired over \$50 billion of the most

advanced armaments since the end of the Gulf War. And those are not just "conventional" weapons—enormous quantities of tanks, aircraft and much more. The Arab state possess large arsenals of chemical and biological weapons, and all of them work feverishly on the development of their nuclear potential. All of those weapons have only one single target and one single purpose: the destruction of the state of Israel. And that goal is not being cancelled for any agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

For both "conventional" war and for war of mass destruction, territory and topography are critical for self-defense and deterrence. The mountainous territory of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") is an indispensable line of defense. It totally controls access to Israel's

heartland from the east. Israel needs this high ground for defense and to be able to peer deeply into enemy territory. The high ground allows Israel to detect missiles while they are still in the launch stage and to destroy them.

**Would the "West Bank" be demilitarized?** Even those who want Israel to retreat to her pre-1967 borders are agreed that the evacuated areas must be demilitarized. But that would be useless. Because the Palestinians will have thousands of trained soldiers, camouflaged as their police force. In case of war against Israel, these troops could be helicoptered in minutes to their positions, with armored

"Without Judea/Samaria (the 'West Bank') Israel would be totally indefensible; therefore, neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States are served by Israel's relinquishing control of the 'West Bank'."

forces reaching them within the same night. In any case, it is highly doubtful that the surrounding hostile Arab nations would allow such a military vacuum to exist. And finally, there is the matter of terrorism. There are over fifteen Palestinian terror organizations that neither Yassir Arafat nor any other Palestinian authority can control. There would be a constant rain of Katyusha rockets launched into the Tel Aviv area and into the entire coastal plain, which contains 80% of Israel's population and of its industrial and military potential. Ben Gurion airport, every incoming and outgoing flight, would be subject to mortar fire or shoulder-held Stinger attack. Does anybody doubt that the Arabs would not exploit that irresistible opportunity?

Without the "West Bank" Israel would be totally indefensible. That is the professional opinion of over 100 U.S. generals and admirals. Israel's strong defensive posture makes it most inadvisable for Israel's enemies to attack her. But once this defensive strength is removed, a coordinated war against Israel can only be a matter of time. The example and fate of Czechoslovakia, which preparatory to the Second World War was dismantled and shorn of its defensive capacity, insistently come to mind. What does all this mean to the United States? In a part of the world in which our country has the most far-reaching geopolitical stakes, Israel is the guarantor of American interests in the area. With Israel in a position of weakness, the role of the United States in the area would collapse and radical states such as Syria, Iraq and Iran would dominate. That is why, despite the heady prospect of "peace in our time," neither the purposes of Israel nor those of the United States would be served by Israel's relinquishing control over the "West Bank."

This ad has been published and paid for by

# FLAME

Facts and Logic about the Middle East  
P.O. Box 590359 ■ San Francisco, CA 94159

FLAME is a tax-exempt, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Its purpose is the research and publication of the facts regarding developments in the Middle East and exposing false propaganda that might harm the interests of the United States and its allies in that area of the world. Your tax-deductible contributions are welcome. They enable us to pursue these goals and to publish these messages in national newspapers and magazines. We have virtually no overhead. Almost all of our revenue pays for our educational work, for these clarifying messages, and for related direct mail.

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## LETTERS

Continued from page 7

able like baseball, and praise of writers "whose visions were the most singular, whose light was most severe is neither persuasive nor analytical.

If Passaro had indeed been so thoroughly educated, then his reading poetry might be wider and more nuanced, his judgments less categorical and more inclusive.

Chris Halliday  
Pittsburgh

Vince Passaro's essay follows the typical rhetorical pattern of complaints about "political correctness" few citations, an anecdote or two and then on to the dire assessments of the death of the classics. Anthony Julius may have written an obstreperous book about Eliot, but Passaro has written a lazy, stereotypical article about an entire profession. Furthermore, the editors of *Harper's* should call a moratorium on grand generalizations about the state of the culture premised on remarks overheard at Manhattan cocktail parties.

David Charbonneau  
Madison, Wis.

### Virtual Holidays

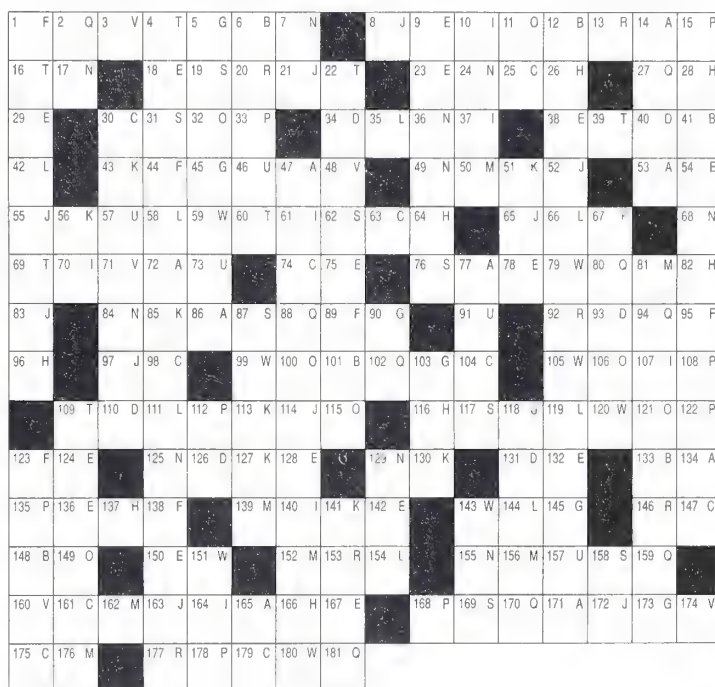
In his essay on the meaning of a history of Kwanzaa ["Dreaming of Black Christmas," January], Gerald Early failed to mention Kwanzaa's striking resemblance to Chanukah, an earlier effort by an American minority group to create an alternative Christmas. Chanukah at least is genuine, though minor, Judaic tradition. An even better example of synthetic celebration is St. Patrick's Day. The earliest Irish immigrants were Protestants from Ulster, and they naturally continued to march in celebration of the Battle of the Boyne where in 1690 the Catholic King James II was defeated by William I, his Protestant successor. St. Patrick's feast day was chosen by Irish Catholic immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century as a counterdemonstration and it is this tradition that has persisted—although its commercialization bodes ill for those concerned with the maintenance of the racial and psychological purity of Kwanzaa.

Wallace J. Guillaume  
Poughkeepsie, N.Y.



# DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 172

**T**he diagram, when filled in, will contain a quotation from a published work. The numbered squares in the diagram correspond to the numbered blanks under the WORDS. The WORDS form an acrostic: the first letter of each spells the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken. The letter in the upper right-hand corner of each square indicates the WORD containing the letter to be entered in that square. Contest rules and the solution to last month's puzzle appear on page 83.



## CLUES

## WORDS

A. Counteractive

47 77 53 165 171 14 134 72

B. "He jests at scars  
that never felt  
\_\_\_\_," says Romeo  
(2 wds.)

6 41 148 12 101 133

C. Spouse, partner  
in work

104 147 25 63 98 175 161 179  
30 74

D. Confab

126 110 93 34 40 131

E. Recognition of a  
fact

18 136 38 78 9 54 23 29  
124 167 132 142 75 128 150

F. Carrottop

95 123 89 44 67 1 138

G. Singer-dancer  
(42nd Street) once  
married to Jolson

5 90 45 173 145 103

H. Netted, snared

82 166 96 137 64 28 26 116

I. Alters, overhauls

140 37 107 61 70 164 10

J. Deliverance,  
rescue

114 172 83 52 8 163 65 55  
97 21

K. Unseats (2 wds.)

51 141 56 115 130 127 85 43

L. Unscrupulous  
subordinates;  
flunkies, cohorts

58 35 42 119 66 111 134 144

M. In the beginning  
(2 wds.)

162 156 139 50 81 176 152

N. Of great size or  
extent

36 84 49 125 68 24 7 155  
129 17

O. Hearing, legal  
examination

106 121 11 100 32 115 149

P. Unknowns, unim-  
portant persons

135 15 112 168 122 178 108 33

Q. Talkativeness

102 94 170 159 80 2 88 27  
181

R. "\_\_\_\_, that tittle  
in the deep, /  
Know no such lib-  
erty" (Lovelace,  
"To Althea in  
Prison")

146 13 177 153 20 92

S. Not educated or  
trained

169 31 76 117 19 87 158 62

T. "An honest God  
is the \_\_\_\_ work  
of man" (Inger-  
soll, "The Gods")

39 69 109 60 16 4 22

U. Competitors for  
the America's  
Cup

46 91 57 157 73 118

V. Roof edge

71 3 174 48 160

W. His majesty's  
apoplexy is, says  
Falstaff, "a kind  
of sleeping in  
\_\_\_\_, a whoreson  
tingling" (2 wds.,  
Henry IV, Part 2)

79 99 120 59 180 143 151 105



# PUZZLE

## Theme and Variations—IV

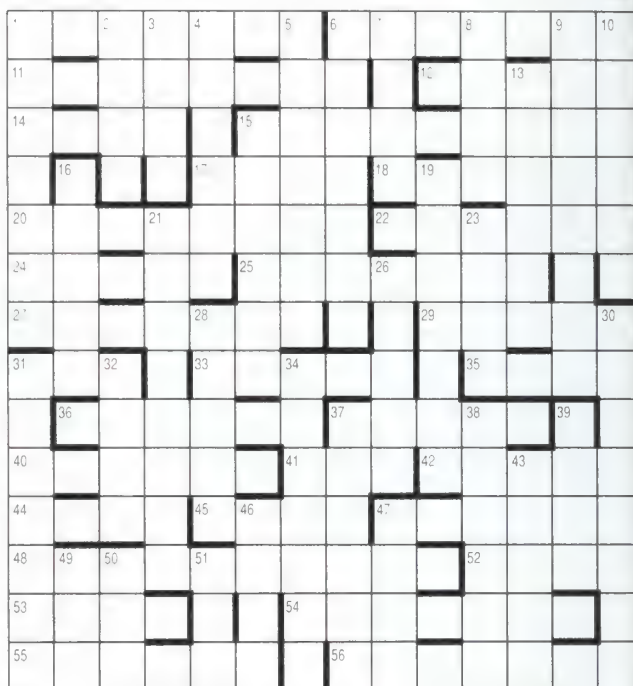
By Richard E. Maltby Jr.

(with acknowledgments to Stephen Sondheim)

Of the twenty included answers, four are Theme words, A, B, C, and D, which form a familiar group with something in common. Each Theme-word then has four "variations" with a certain relationship to it. The relationship is different in each case.

E.g., if Theme-word A were STARS, possible variations might be GARBO and HEPBURN (examples); and if Theme-word B were STRIPES, possible variations might be PERSIST and SPRITES (anagrams).

Answers include six proper names and two common foreign words. 17A is obscure. The variations to D must be read in a certain sequence in order to understand their relationship, one variation of which is a proper name. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 83.



### ACROSS

11. Army member to get married fast for big bucks (8)
12. Having vegetables brought back in piece of cloth (5)
14. Run around with one involved in corruption (4)
17. Rights issue in *Jurassic Park* (4)
18. Tight carpeting in endless decline (6)
20. Got to love deadener after surgery (8)
22. Without or with battery, video died (6)
25. One who falls in a chair heavily—does that sound proper in Japan? (7)
27. "Shrink Gains Growth"—with an all-black cast (7)
29. Building is real without an I-beam (5)
31. It's essential to success facing tee? (3)
35. Beach cover-up with nothing on (4)
37. THEME-WORD D. Variations: 43D (5), 26D (5), 24A (5), and 33A (5) (in correct order)
40. Comparatively strung-out and giving more lip? (6)
41. D) This sounds like one duck shy (3)
42. Leather brought around over the ear (5)
44. Hear all about Big Bird (4)
45. I'm certainly on the tail of English sightseers! (4)
47. Strategy for New York Team Club's running back (6)
48. Names use an organization for secretaries (10)
52. Woman having a place for the players of 47A (4)
53. A bit of a dullard, and fat (4)
54. Jailors without number stuffed food (7)

56. THEME-WORD A. Variations: 1A (7), 1D (7), 5D (7), and 19D (7)

### DOWN

2. Small thing swimming in moat (4)
3. Beast that's mythical, though just barely identified (4)
4. No-show at a religious dinner, but in jail he got reformed (6)
8. Island perimeters leave old Noah upset (4)
9. Involved in getting *Dateline* involved (8)
10. Gives up profits (6)
13. For big trials I travel in trains (6)
16. Grasps bouquet in the audience (5)
21. Old Italian coining unit—rare (8)
23. Joining up, I've a larger calf (4)
28. A crowd could be there? (5)
30. THEME-WORD C. Variations: 6A (7), 36A (6), 55A (6), and 15D (6)
32. THEME-WORD B. Variations: 15A (9), 6D (7), 7D (4), and 31D (7)
34. Trips up, like coppers (7)
37. Spouts off—it can go either way (6)
38. Disorders inspiring people to take in a bit of sex (6)
39. French concept of I.D. (4)
46. "Cry" (the old record) (4)
47. Healers getting a lift fighting God (4)
49. West of Hollywood, east of Massachusetts, east ... (3)
50. Member of a circle is a Catholic (3)
51. German city culminates in it? Quite the reverse! (3)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Theme and Variations—IV," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by April 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the June issue. Winners of the February puzzle, "Sixes and Sevens V," are William F. Griffin Jr., Boston, Massachusetts; Paul and Max Glass, Kenmore, New York; and Gayle Dempsey, Needham, Massachusetts.



A photograph of two men in cowboy hats and yellow shirts, crouching by a campfire in a wooded area. One man is smiling and holding a small white container, while the other is leaning over him. A black pot sits on the fire. The scene is lit with warm, golden light.

Come to where the flavor is.



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# HARPER'S

HARPER'S MAGAZINE/MAY 1997 \$3.95



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About Computers, Chess, Clones, and Human Anxiety

*James Bailey*

*David Gelernter*

*Jaron Lanier*

*Charles Siebert*

## TOWARD AN END OF BLACKNESS

An Argument for the Surrender of Race Consciousness

*By Jim Sleeper*

BURLINGAME

## THE LONG GOOD-BYE

Mother's Day in Federal Prison

*By Amanda Coyne*

APR 23 1997

LIBRARY

*Also: LBJ, Harlan Ellison, the Duchess of Marlboro,  
and the Texas nail-file massacre*



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Ford Explorer (0-60 mph in 11.05 sec.)

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# IN A RECENT TEST OF PEDAL WASN'T THE O

## A PEDAL TO THE METAL.

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at first glance, our 2.5-liter horizontally opposed

engine may have ap-

peared to be no match for such

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thanks to the added traction

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Ground Clearance (in.)	7.3	6.7	8.3	7.8
Front Legroom Headroom (in.)	40.2/43.3	39.9/42.4	39.5/42.4	37.8/41.4
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unlike any other. There's also

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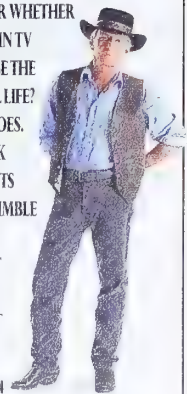
call our toll-free number:

1-800-WANT-AWD. But whatever you do, you'd better step

on it. Because these babies really are going fast.

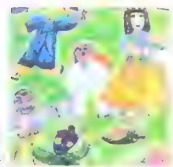
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THE BLOKES IN TV  
COMMERCIALS USE THE  
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WELL, THIS ONE DOES.  
AND MY OUTBACK  
HAS LIVED UP TO ITS  
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OPINION, IT'S ONE  
RIPPER CAR. THAT  
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IN CASE YA DIDN'T  
KNOW.

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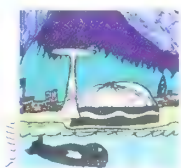




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# HARPER'S

M A G A Z I N E

FOUNDED IN 1850 / VOL. 294, NO. 1764

MAY 1997

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# HARPER'S

# LETTERS

## Madness as Manual

As Medical Director of the American Psychiatric Association, I am both professionally and personally troubled by L. J. Davis's scathing review of the APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition*, usually known as the *DSM-IV* ["The Encyclopedia of Insanity," February]. This book is the product of years of labor on the part of psychiatric physicians and other experts dedicated to easing the suffering caused by mental illnesses and substance-use disorders. I found Davis's review particularly upsetting since the *DSM-IV* is dedicated to me, as a glance inside its front cover will confirm.

I have worked throughout my career to develop a scientifically based diagnostic system that limits the definition of mental illness precisely so that it does not describe "the human condition," as Davis puts it. Indeed, it was the tendency in the 1950s and 1960s to use more encompassing definitions of mental illnesses. Today's current, objective nomenclature enables us to exclude those without mental disorders from psychiatric diagnosis. By having specific diagnoses, we are simply creating a more detailed and effective means of communication about more homogeneous subgroups—that is, we're discussing smaller pieces of the same pie, not making the pie larger.

I would like the readers of *Harper's Magazine* to know that the diagnostic criteria set forth in the *DSM-IV* are based on scientific evidence, rigorous peer review, and testing for validity in treatment settings, the documentation of which is readily available from the American Psychiatric Association at medical libraries nationwide. Davis seems unaware of the fact that treatment success rates for mental disorders match or exceed those in other areas of medicine, and that the number of people diagnosed using the *DSM* criteria is much smaller today than it was in the past. Thus his assertions that the volume contains "a madness for everyone" are exactly wrong.

Mental illnesses are a major public health problem whose costs are measured in human lives and disrupted economies. L. J. Davis trivializes the illnesses, all those who experience them, and all those who treat them.

Melvin Sabshin, M.D.  
Washington

One thread in L. J. Davis's argument is the idea that mental suffering is not necessarily mental illness. The other is that the *DSM-IV* was written for the purpose of justifying payment to mental-health practitioners for the treatment of illnesses as defined by the practitioners themselves. I agree with both points.

The concept of mental illness arises from the medicalization of mental-health treatment in the United States. Rather than understanding mental illness as psychological suffering, the *DSM-IV* attempts to classify it as a series of

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DAVID GUTERSON, BARBARA GRIZZUTI HARRISON,  
JACK HITT, STEPHEN HUBBELL, BARRY LOPEZ,  
RICHARD RODRIGUEZ, ELIZABETH RUBIN,  
EARL SHORRIS, SHELBY STEELE, SALLIE TISDALE,  
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ganic diseases in order to justify insurance coverage. But L. J. Davis may not be aware that there is a growing body of opinion that opposes third-party payment and the inevitable distortions of treatment caused by the medical model and its ritualized embodiment in the DSM-IV. This opposition comes from psychoanalysts.

Psychoanalysis is devoted to the understanding and acceptance of the analyst's own point of view. This is the exact opposite of the DSM-IV's approach. Psychoanalysts are increasingly nonmedical, often drawn from the ranks of psychologists and social workers, professions devoted to the alleviation of misery that is neither medical nor defined by the practitioner but responsive to the suffering human being who voluntarily seeks help.

*Marlene Kramer Richards, Ed. D.*  
New York City

L. J. Davis's "The Encyclopedia of Insanity" offers a signal example of the drive-by polemic, an inventive genre to help lazy, tired, or over-

worked intellectuals whip up snappy, publishable bits of prose with minimal investments of time or cognitive exertion. The formula goes like this: select an obscure text from a poorly understood or widely disliked field, cite a handful of apparently ridiculous examples, giving no contextual explanation, and then embellish amply with stinging witticisms and derisive sneers.

Davis berates the DSM-IV's compilers for "confining themselves to a single interpretation of the human dilemma—madness." This is rather like criticizing the publishers of the OED by telling them that there's more to life than words. Davis says little about the function of the book itself, since his ultimate interest is in savaging the fields of psychology and psychiatry (terms he uses interchangeably), not in illuminating or explaining anything about them. Thus, the piece reads a bit like a "review" of the telephone book used to launch an extended critique of the telecommunications industry.

As one affected with bipolar disorder, I am offended by Davis's coarse,

flippant remarks—particularly his claim that, according to the DSM-IV, "these disorders may not even exist." A scintilla of effort would reveal a vast literature chronicling the very real pains and challenges affecting those who suffer from the mental illnesses he so cavalierly lampoons.

*Eric S. Nygren*  
Seattle

As a doctoral student in clinical psychology, I found L. J. Davis's article obsessive (301.4), paranoid (301.0), and misleading (not a billable claim). At its best, the DSM-IV should be used as a guide for discriminating between clinical pictures and then, perhaps, disregarded. Like any text, if read literally it becomes dangerous, rigid, stigmatizing, and self-serving. The pressure to create a monster like the DSM is brought on by the field's loyalty to the medical model as well as insurance companies' demand for brief treatment and quick cure. Perhaps the field will eventually admit to itself that it is not a science but rather an evolving philosophy and art. We

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are modern witch doctors. Likewise, it would behoove medical professionals to begin to acknowledge that they treat more than the body. It is not easy to cure a soul.

Amy Gershenson  
Brooklyn

The *DSM-IV* is a carefully constructed diagnostic system; used properly, it does not lead to the ludicrous overdiagnosis L. J. Davis satirizes. That's not the problem.

The problem with the *DSM-IV* is that it encourages its users to impose a pseudoscientific language on what is essentially an interpersonal undertaking and to apply behaviorally based categories instead of coming to understand the patient. Since their inception in nineteenth-century laboratories and clinics, psychology and psychiatry have suffered from a neurotic disorder known as Physics Envy (*DSM-IV*, 892.29), characterized by a chronic sense of inferiority to the natural sciences. And whereas those natural sciences managed to outgrow their grandiose claims of prediction and control, psychology continued its shrill insistence that it too was a real science, adducing as evidence its ability to generate scientific-sounding language and to ignore the human nature of its subject matter.

Today many psychotherapists feel that the only way to justify their services to hostile third parties is to sound as scientific as possible. Satirical criticism of psychotherapy such as Davis's is all too easy when the profession itself seems to base its value to society on the precision of its rhetoric. Psychotherapy's strong suit will continue to be its empathic skill at understanding human suffering through an alliance with the suffering person.

Andrew Garrison, Ph.D.  
Oxford, Ohio

Having sorted through the clutter of absurdities in L. J. Davis's weird article "The Encyclopedia of Insanity," I would like to address two of its mistaken premises. One concerns Davis's view of the distinction between sanity and insanity, and the

other has to do with the role of science in psychiatry.

First, Davis seems to assume a vast gulf between "sanity," which he allows to remain undefined, and "insanity," to which he refers at various points as "madness," "not playing with a full deck," and as being "nuts" or "crackers." In other words, you are either perfectly balanced or completely psychotic. The simple opposition has little to do with reality. It would be best to think of the *DSM-IV* as what it is: a reference book in a field of medicine, and therefore comparable not to the works of Shakespeare or Dickens but to textbooks of endocrinology or infectious disease. Phrases like "you have bats in your belfry," which signify that the subject and his concerns are not to be taken seriously, are simply irrelevant. They say nothing about the *DSM-IV* but a great deal about the author's bigotry.

When Davis writes that with the deletion of theories about the causes of mental illness after the *DSM-IV*, subsequent editions "abandoned the rigorous proofs of the scientific method," it is hard to know what image of science he has in mind. The search for the biological and environmental causes of mental illness is a very active area of science led in large part by the contributors to the *DSM-IV*. But as a scientific document, the book's role in the search resembles the role of taxonomy in biology. It does not follow from the absence of a discussion of causation that the book's authors are asserting that mental diseases have no causes.

Ultimately, Davis's "Encyclopedia of Insanity" may best be read not as an essay but as a work of experimental fiction. The many irrational grudges expressed create a narrative whose emotional life threatens to overwhelm any assessment of the book supposedly under review. If this is what Davis intended, I tip my hat. But in the context of *Harper's Magazine*, there is a danger that readers will mistake his piece for serious opinion.

William Frucht  
Danbury, Conn.



## Mal du Siècle

The latest edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Intelligentsia Association* (DSM-V) adds the following diagnostic invention: Lapham's Malaise (1999.09). According to the manual, Lapham's Malaise tends to afflict individuals, often men, trapped in countenourful circumstances that are nonetheless perceived as being dangerous to moral fitness. The specific criteria are as follows:

A. For a period of at least two years, the individual must have experienced nearly every day at least four of the following:

1. The persistent belief that the government is actually run by a hearty band of would-be robber barons and cut-purse entrepreneurs.

2. An obsessive insistence on referring to the wealthy as the "equestrian class."

3. A gnawing anxiety that the gap between the rich and everyone else, especially the poor, is undermining the possibility of democracy.

4. An insistent dysphoria related to the public demonstrations of igno-

rance by those who lead the masses by the nose.

5. Agitation related to the perception that those in the know ought to know better.

6. The delusion that the media are merely providing bread and circuses for the masses.

B. These symptoms cannot be better explained by Bennett's Reproach (see moral posturing, 1950.13), Bork's Snit (see righteous ignorance, 1933.09), or Clinton's Lapse (see welfare mother antipathy, 1967.00).

C. These symptoms are not due to the abuse of Macallan's single malt Scotch and Cuban cigars.

The prognosis for Lapham's Malaise is unmentioned in the manual, but I hope it is good, for I fear that I, too, suffer from this disorder.

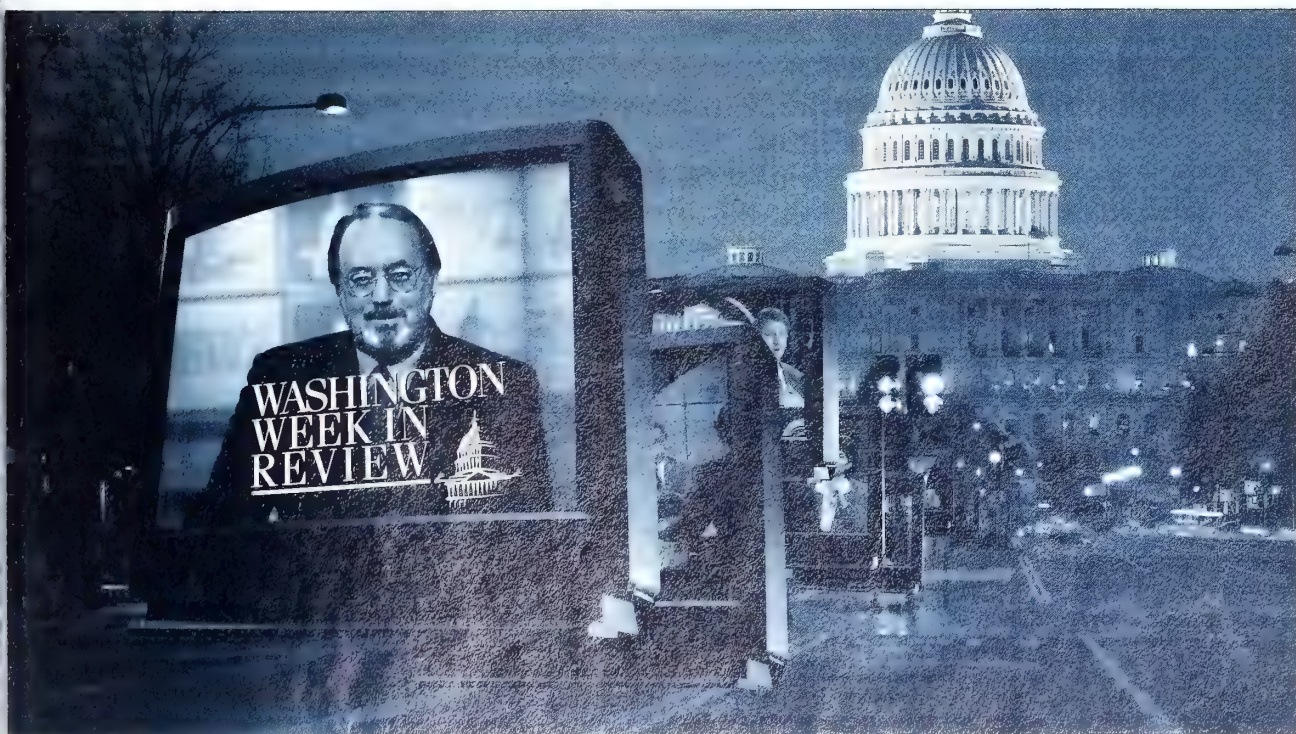
Dennis Saleebey  
Lawrence, Kan.

## Exporting Misery

Ted C. Fishman correctly points out in his essay "The Joys of Global Investment" [February] that international capital flows often "chase hu-

man misery." Yet we should be careful not to blame the concept of economic freedom for the human-rights travesties furthered by globalized investment. A case could be made, in fact, that it is precisely the lack of such liberty that allows Korean factories in Guatemala and Honduras to pay starvation wages to their employees and fat dividends to their American stockholders.

This argument is extremely difficult to put forth in the public arena, however, because the popular definition of economic liberty includes the right to buy labor globally but not to sell it that way. Although technology and the law currently allow capital to flow as quickly and assuredly between nations as between neighborhoods, the ability of labor-owners (that is, workers) to sell their product abroad has never been more strictly controlled. Labor has always been less liquid than capital, and there have been moments in history when immigration was even more difficult than it is today, but the imbalance between labor and capital fluidity has never been greater.



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—Lewis H. Lapham, Editor,  
*Harper's Magazine*

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Dave McCombs  
Funabashi-shi, Chiba  
Japan

Once again, Ted C. Fishman self-pityingly parades before us his sense of financial insecurity, his awareness of his own hypocrisy, and his bottomless self-loathing. Is the oppressive irony of his piece supposed to mitigate—for him, for us, or for any of the underage, underpaid workers in the global sweatshop—his complacent cooperation in the plundering of the Third World? His excuse that his daughter and son will need to be "expensively educated" doesn't wash. They can improve their math scores quite cheaply at home with the aid of flash cards. Their father ought to worry a little more about the rancid values he's passing on to them.

Cary Barnes  
Madrid

### Earth Daze

In their zeal to attack President Clinton's environmental record ["Clinton's Bogus Earth Days," Readings, February], Jeffrey St. Clair and Alexander Cockburn recklessly distort both his actions and the positions of environmental groups, including the Sierra Club. To top it off, they add a fair dollop of malicious invention of their own.

They suggest, for example, that Clinton's designation of the new Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah represents the end to environmentalists' long-held dream for 5.7 million acres of preserved wilderness in Utah. The truth is that no one ever expected the entire 5.7 million acres to be set aside all at once, but isn't the protection of 1.8 million acres worth celebrating? Contrary to St. Clair and Cockburn's gloomy view, the national monument designation definitely puts an end to the coal-mining schemes planned for the area, which is why the Dutch-owned Andalex corporation is suing

in an attempt to have it overturned.

In the matter of the Headwaters Forest, a stand of redwoods in northern California, all agree that this privately owned land is "precious" and that it needs to be preserved. The allegation that the Sierra Club stood ready to trade off San Francisco Presidio for the Headwaters, however, is a total invention. No such trade was ever proposed—and if it were, it would be vociferously resisted by the Sierra Club, which was the major actor in creating the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, of which the Presidio is a part.

Carl Pope  
Executive Director, Sierra Club  
San Francisco

It's trite but true that the perfect enemy of the good—a maxim Jeffrey St. Clair and Alexander Cockburn should have considered before they castigated President Clinton for failing to win absolute victories in several environmental battles.

The President is blamed for giving Noranda, a Canadian mining company, veto power over a voluntary land swap that would stop a proposed gold mine near Yellowstone National Park. Well, that is the nature of a swap: both sides willingly exchange items of value. St. Clair and Cockburn also warn that the President's action will encourage other developers to threaten public lands in hopes of lucrative buyouts. If this turns out to be true, let's blame the developers' greed and selfishness instead of the President's willingness to tackle a tough problem.

St. Clair and Cockburn also task President Clinton to task for the less-than-perfect protection that the new Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument will enjoy. As in the case with the mine near Yellowstone, the mining company here has a legal claim to coal deposits in certain areas of the Escalante. We may wish this were not the case, but the President was bound by the law.

The awkward truth is that large land exchanges, such as those at Yellowstone and Escalante, are complicated, fragile constructs. Neither the Yellowstone deal nor the Escalante

*Continued on page 7*

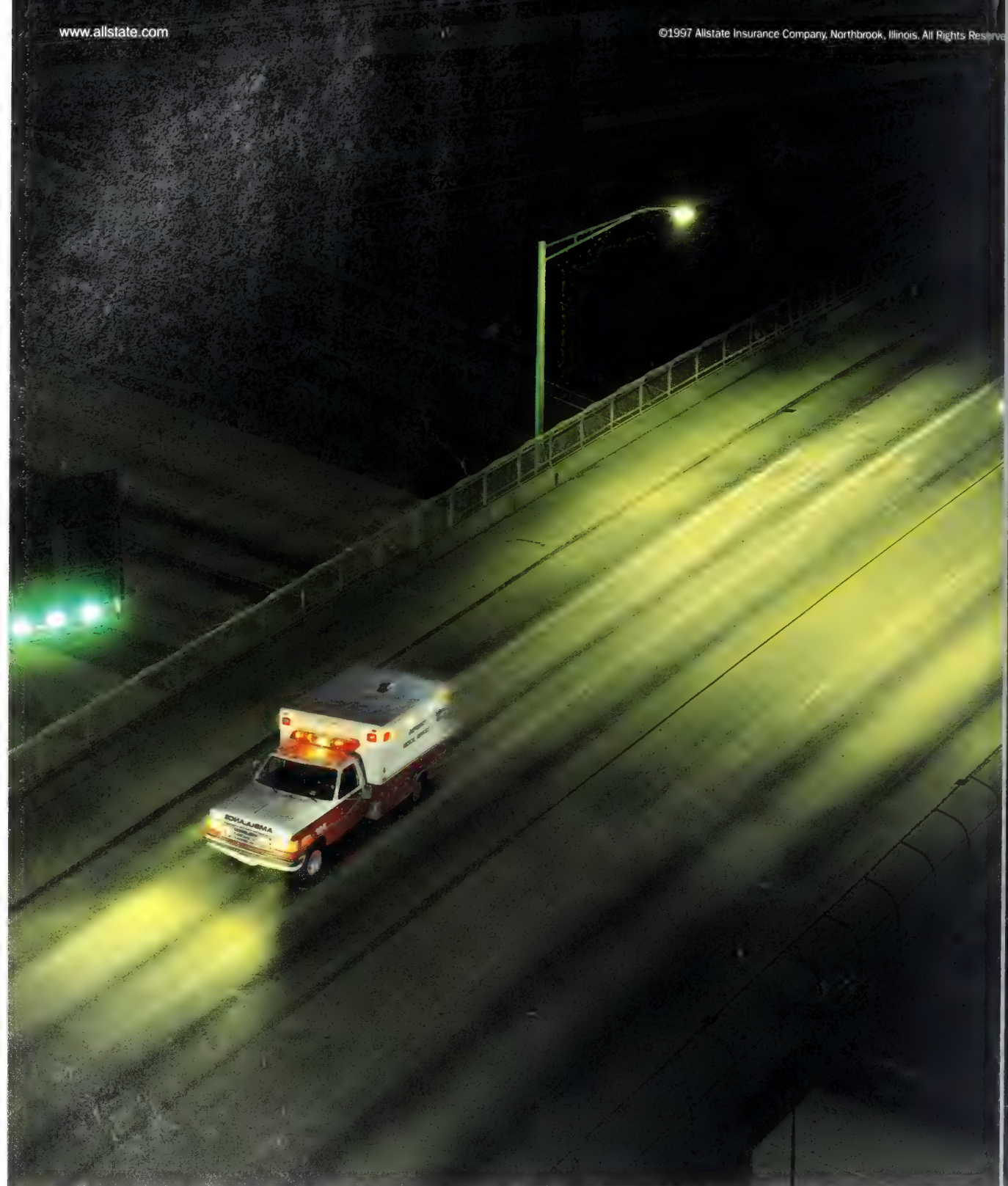


IT'S YOUR CALL.

A black and white portrait of a woman with voluminous, curly hair, smiling broadly. She is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored top. The background is plain and light-colored.

Lyons, 1990; Warr, 1991; Viscusi, 1992). The primary long-term outcome of the Warr study will be the identification of the relative importance of various causes of the decline in night and afternoon productivity. The following are the hypotheses that will be offered by the researchers: (1) the decline in productivity is due to fatigue; (2) the decline is due to circadian rhythms; (3) the decline is due to the effects of the shift schedule; (4) the decline is due to the effects of the shift schedule and circadian rhythms; (5) the decline is due to the effects of the shift schedule, circadian rhythms, and fatigue; (6) the decline is due to the effects of the shift schedule, circadian rhythms, and fatigue, and the effects of the shift schedule are the most important.





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# NOTEBOOK

## Magic lanterns By Lewis H. Lapham

*The map appears to us more real than the land.*

—D. H. Lawrence

**I**n last month's column I took up the question of what constitutes history in a semiliterate society that no longer places much store in either the written word or the forms of extended narrative, and after making a few supplemental observations—mostly about the ever-increasing number of people in the country, no matter how well or how poorly educated, who don't care to read—I arrived at a discussion of Hermann Hesse's novel *The Glass Bead Game*. Hesse published the novel in 1943, and like Marshall McLuhan, whose *Understanding Media* appeared in 1964, he anticipated the compression of the narrative voice (open to doubt and contradiction) into brief poetic statement best rendered as slogan or metaphor.

Searching for a means to express all the noble or worthy thoughts warehoused in the vaults of Western civilization, Hesse proposed a vast inventory of recombinant algorithms, analogous to Egyptian hieroglyphs or Chinese ideograms, each of them reduced to the form of a symbolic glass bead representing ideas as specific as Newton's Law of Gravitation or the opening phrase of Bach's Mass in B Minor. The notation allowed for the composition of history as if it were music made for an audience of cognoscenti, intellectuals not unlike Hesse himself, who could be trusted to

appreciate the references to Greek philology, quantum mechanics, and Napoleon as the Zeitgeist on horseback at Waterloo. Hesse couldn't have guessed that more than fifty years later the audience he had in mind would come to consist of high school students capable of working problems in calculus while at the same time watching *Seinfeld*, listening to Bush, and plotting on the Internet the Starship *Enterprise*'s course for Vandor IX. Nor would he have expected his scholarly bead game to evolve into the slang of commercial advertising, its logic and digital structure exactly matched to the texts of a vernacular culture made from the glyphs and runes for Pepsi, Nike, IBM, Calvin Klein, and Budweiser beer.

Just as McLuhan's theory of media presupposed the defections of meaning from the idioms of print to those of the camera and the computer, Hesse's bead game suggested the process of reduction and compression that over the last fifty years has changed every other form of what was once a literary aesthetic, forcing university history departments to break up into the secessionist provinces of cultural and gender studies, encouraging the authors of minimalist novels to present a few sentences of enigmatic description (of a water pump, a lock of hair, or a railroad station) as symbols encompassing the definitive histories of the Mississippi River or the American feminist movement, persuading John Updike that American literature as-

pired to the brilliance and sophistication of the television commercial.

My own introduction to the set of circumstances recognized by Hesse and codified by McLuhan took place in the early 1970s when I was asked by NBC television to consider writing a documentary about what was then known as "the energy crisis." The network had gone to no small trouble or expense to collect nineteen hours of handsome film—footage of Arab oil sheiks and American politicians, of tankers riding at anchor in New York Harbor or streaming through the Strait of Hormuz, long lines of cars at California gas stations—but nobody knew what the pictures were supposed to mean. Until the producers decided what it was they wanted to say—bad Arabs, good Americans; good Arabs, bad Americans; oil reserves plentiful and cheap; oil reserves expensive and scarce—they might as well have been staring at nineteen hours of empty sky. Because none of the people in the room knew anything about the oil business other than what they had read on the front page of the *New York Times*, I could foresee a long series of meetings likely to lead nowhere except back to the front page of the *New York Times*, and I wondered why the network didn't borrow the practice of David Hockney—cut the paper into little pieces, paste up the words on a studio wall, and film the collage from six angles over the top of Edwin Newman's head.



Although I declined the NBC proposition—two years later I accepted an invitation from a British producer to contribute to a six-hour television anniversary about America in the twentieth century, and in the course of doing so I discovered what McLuhan meant by the phrase “The medium is the message.” Allotted forty-three seconds and seventy-eight words in which to explain the origins of the Second World War, while at the same time providing a transition from still photographs of Neville Chamberlain at the Munich Peace Conference in 1938 to newsreel footage of the German Luftwaffe bombing Poland in September 1939, I understood that television bears more of a resemblance to symbolist poetry than it does even to newspaper prose. The camera looks but doesn’t see, and the necessary compression forces both the words and the images to become less literal and more

figurative.

**T**wenty-three years after the late President Richard M. Nixon was frog-marched out of the White House, the single word “Watergate” brings to mind not only the burglaries at the building of that name but also a film montage intercutting scenes of the Vietnam War with the face of Sam Ivin superimposed on the faces of H. R. Haldeman and Archibald Cox, Henry Kissinger’s voice mixed with the sound of incoming artillery at Danang, clouds of tear gas drifting across college lawns and the steps of the Pentagon, Nixon himself waving good-bye from the door of the helicopter on the White House lawn.

The Watergate metaphor replaced the Camelot metaphor, another trope made to the specifications of the electronic media, and by the winter of 1975 what was once a land of orchards and sweet running streams had become a desert inhabited by foul and crawling things. Before Watergate, most politicians were presumed trustworthy until proven guilty of fraud or discovered with a Mafia kingpin in a Baltimore hotel. Maybe not all of them were as handsome as Jack Kennedy or as

earnest as Jimmy Stewart in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, but it was thought that they were not the kind of people who accepted money from Chinese arms merchants or licked a prostitute’s toes.

The towers of Camelot and the ruin of Watergate serve as the two sovereign metaphors for the political history of the United States over the last quarter of a century. Each president subsequent to Kennedy and Nixon has attempted to ally his administration with the glory of the former (behold, another knight come to the Round Table) and sentence his opponent (treacherous friend to the traitor Mordred) to the dungeons of the latter. Every scandal worthy of the name aspires to the ignominy of the suffix “gate” (Irangate, Troopergate, etc.), and on the sunnier side of the proposition, the writers of political ad copy strive for phrases that will restore to government the charm of musical comedy—“Morning in America,” “A thousand points of light,” “A place called Hope.”

Although the tropes seldom accomplish all they intend, they conform to the rules of Hesse’s *Das Glasperlenspiel* and meet the requirements of the electronic media. Instead of narrative we have montage, and our perceptions being tuned to the surfaces of film rather than to the structures of print, we tell one another stories not by lining up rows of words but by making connections (sometimes synchronous, sometimes in juxtaposition) between the film loops stored in our heads. Words define themselves not as signs of a specific meaning but as symbols bearing lesser or greater weights of cinematic association, and history becomes a form of film criticism.

Although not yet as densely imprinted as the word “Watergate,” the runes “O.J.,” “Disney,” “Lincoln bedroom,” “Microsoft,” “Greenspan,” and “Bork” all evoke a series of images from which I could construct—as if from a strand of DNA—the whole of America’s recent social, political, and economic history. Aligned with images of both Rodney and Martin Luther King (one of them prostrate on a Los Angeles freeway, the other

standing before a crowd on the Washington Mall), O.J. signifies black; set in the context of the NFL (another not inconsiderable trope) O.J. connotes talent; matched with Heidi Fleiss, O.J. conjugates as decadence, Hollywood celebrity, or the vagaries of California jurisprudence. “Microsoft” and “Lincoln bedroom” lend themselves to similar sets of changes, similar to those improvised by a jazz musician taking liberties with a standard melody, or Hesse’s Magister Ludi setting up beads in the Academy at Castalia.

No wonder the historian finds it hard to tell a straight story. The prospective readers think in circles. Conversant with the wandering paths through cyberspace (click on genetics, go to Pleistocene) and accustomed to the dissolving image seen on the eleven o’clock news or in the movies of Oliver Stone, the audience imprisoned within the walls of the electronic media inhabits the illusion of a once-upon-a-time in which Eva Perón is a model for Yve St. Laurent and a friend of Andrei Lloyd Webber, and Jane Austen

forever riding in a carriage on the road to Bath.

**H**ow then to salvage from the past any meaning that doesn’t instantly collapse into surrealist fantasy, a collage by David Hockney, or together with *The English Patient*, a epic television commercial for a perfume yet to be named? By the historians whom I’ve read in the last several years, the question seems to me best answered by Evan Connell in *Son of the Morning Star*. The book takes up the subject of what is now known as the Battle of the Little Bighorn, where, on June 25, 1876, General George A. Custer led five companies of the 7th Cavalry into an armed mob of yipping and barking Unkpapa Sioux, who promptly made his name a synonym for glory. But instead of trying to reconstruct patriotic melodrama, Connell deconstructs one of the more elaborate metaphors in the syllabus of American myth. He proceeds by digression and conducts an interrogation of the surviving facts. Curious about a facet of that unfortunate afternoon



nd careful to distinguish between that is known and what can be surmised, Connell inquires about everything—Custer's horse, Dandy, the prior service records of Major Reno and Captain Benteen, Sioux burialcaffolds, steamboat navigation on the Yellowstone River, the practice of taking scalps, the rate of fire expected of a .44 caliber Remington revolver, buffalo skulls, Crazy Horse repairing himself for battle by painting white hailstones on his body and tying a brown pebble behind one ear. As the details accumulate, they extend and compound one another, and the reader who stays the course of Connell's curiosity comes away with the sense of a weightless flag having been grounded on the field of human experience and clearly marked on the map of time.

Were I to teach history either to grammar-school or college students, I would borrow from the example of Connell and address a year's course to a cross section of time as brief as a week but under no circumstances longer than six months. Making a foreground of a single set of events—it's say the Constitutional Convention assembled in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787—I would begin with Benjamin Franklin, a benevolent gentleman of eighty-one known for his gargantuan sexual appetite as well as for his wisdom, seated between Alexander Hamilton and James Madison for the occasion of the convention's opening on June 5, on a little platform raised one short step above the chairs arranged for the other fifty-odd delegates gathered in the statehouse to draw the blueprint of a republic for which, as Madison informed the company, there had been no precedent in the whole of history." Madison kept careful notes of the proceedings of the next three months, and to the text in hand I would add concentric rings of historical circumstance—first the size and condition of the city of Philadelphia, understood at the time as a sink of iniquity and a capital of dissipation, its sidewalks and gutters paved with brick but reeking with the stench of horse and human excrement, the Quaker drawing rooms crowded with card tables

and crystal bowls of rum, pigs rooting through the quagmire of the streets for spoiled vegetables and rotted oysters, fashionable ladies followed on their afternoon walks by black slave boys carrying their toilet cases and bonbon boxes.

The convention took place in secret, behind windows stuffed with felt and no word of the arguments among the uniformly prosperous delegates (forty of them owed money by the Congress and fifteen owning slaves) released to the rabble-rousing press. The gentlemen in fine broadcloth and brocade had come to arrange the political affairs of the new nation in ways convenient to their own economic interests, and by describing the nature of those interests, I could extend the circles of reference into Virginia and Massachusetts, and then, by again widening the lens but still in the summer of 1787, to the Indian frontier in western Pennsylvania and the tennis court at Versailles, or possibly as far as Russia, where Catherine the Great was making her tour of Potemkin's artificial villages (not so different from the ones imagined by Hillary Rodham Clinton on her travels through the American Midwest), or to Prague, where Mozart that year conducted the first performance of *Don Giovanni*.

If at the end of the term the students at least had learned that the parade floats marched across the screen of the news go nowhere except around in circles, I would count the course a success. Because the camera seems to impart meaning where no meaning exists, too often I meet people who think it sufficient merely to recognize the name and shape of Tom Cruise or Newt Gingrich, and that by stringing their symbols like beads on a therapeutic thread of private reverie, they have said something both public and profound. Apparently it never occurs to them that they speak a language of prerecorded experience and ready-made cliché, geared to the specifications of a machine in a magic kingdom where, in Simone Weil's apt but bleak phrase, "It is the thing that thinks, and the man who is reduced to the state of the thing."



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# HARPER'S INDEX

Rank of China among the least effective lobbyists in Washington, according to U.S. Ambassador Jim Sasser : 1

Number of "active" dissidents in China at the end of last year, according to the State Department : 0

Amount by which U.S. exports to China last year fell short of U.S. exports to Belgium : \$542,000,000

Amount the World Bank will finish spending this year on an expansion of its Washington headquarters : \$314,000,000

Ratio of the project's cost overruns to overdue debt the Bank's client countries cannot exceed without penalty : 5,150:1

Contributions to the DNC made by White House overnight guests, per square foot of the Lincoln bedroom : \$14,442.50

Amount the Cheyenne-Arapaho tribe took from its welfare fund last year to donate to the DNC : \$107,000

Chance that an African-American man was ineligible to vote last year due to former or current imprisonment : 1 in 7

Percentage of female prison inmates who are mothers : 78 (see page 70)

Average number of hours per week of public service performed last year by each Ohio prisoner who volunteered for it : 4.3

Average number of hours per week of public service performed last year by a free American : 4.2

Percentage of law students who default on their loans within three years of graduation : 17

Median jury award made against a U.S. news media company last year : \$2,380,000

Median award in 1990 : \$550,000

Rank of Food Lion among U.S. employers that have paid the largest fines for overtime- and minimum-wage violations : 1

Rank of the Manpower temporary agency among U.S. companies employing the largest number of workers : 1

Chance that a U.S. psychotherapist has a second job : 1 in 3

Chance that a San Francisco AIDS doctor has helped at least one patient commit suicide : 1 in 2

Number of the 133 U.S. polio cases reported between 1980 and 1994 that were caused by the vaccine : 125

Average number of toxic spills that take place each day in the U.S. : 21

Percentage of Minnesota counties reporting a "highly unusual number" of deformed frogs last year : 62

Number of times Kermit the Frog has delivered a college graduation commencement address : 2

Percentage change since 1980 in the number of college freshmen who say they feel "overwhelmed" : +100

Ratio of decibels emitted by an airplane jet engine to those emitted by "the Trap," a new car alarm : 1:1

Number of microphones installed in Redwood City, California, last August as part of its "Urban Gunfire Location System" : 8

Number of town residents killed by random gunfire before the program was instituted : 0

Percentage change since 1993 in the number of licensed U.S. gun dealers : -57

Percentage change in Wyoming auto fatalities since the state raised the highway speed limit to 75 mph in 1995 : -16

Blood-alcohol level a driver would need in order to be as dangerous as a driver using a cellular phone : 0.1

Chance that a human being alive today has never made a telephone call : 2 in 3

Ratio of the number of telephone lines in sub-Saharan Africa to the number in Manhattan : 2:3

Ratio of the number of New Yorkers bitten by rats in 1995 to the number bitten by other New Yorkers : 1:3

Amount Americans spent last year on golf clubs : \$1,370,000,000

Price of a packet of Diet Dirt, sterilized soil to be sprinkled over food to make it repugnant : \$9.95

Number of bulletproof Bibles manufactured last year by California's Innovative Marketing Alliance : 1,000

Number of temporary tattoos sported by Pat Boone while promoting his new album, *In a Metal Mood* : 12

Hourly rate charged by Mighty Moms, a Minnesota group that confronts rowdy mall teens with "verbal judo" : \$20

Number of days before winning the U.S. Figure Skating Championship last winter that Tara Lipinski lost a baby tooth : 5

Percentage change since 1995 in the average tooth-fairy payment, per tooth : +10

Amount Burt Reynolds owes his toupee maker : \$121,796.62

*Figures cited have been adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of March 1997. Sources are listed on page 69.*

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# READINGS

[Letter]

## BURIED ALIVE IN IRAN

*From an open letter written by Faraj Sarkuhi, editor of the Iranian literary magazine Adineh and one of the signatories of the "1994 Declaration of 134 Iranian Writers," which was written after essayist Ali Akbar Sirjani died in prison and which calls for an end to state censorship of literature. Since the signing of the declaration, the writers' meetings have been broken up by Iranian intelligence officers, and their materials have been confiscated; two of the signatories, Ahmed Miralai and Ghaffar Hosseini, have been found dead. On November 3, 1996, Sarkuhi was arrested by the Iranian security police. He was released on December 20 and wrote the letter below while he was free. Sarkuhi was arrested again on January 27; on February 21, he called his wife from prison and told her that he might be released if she agreed to say that the letter was inauthentic. He remains in prison. The letter, which was translated from the Farsi by the PEN American Center, was excerpted in the February 22 issue of The Globe and Mail, the Toronto daily.*

**T**oday is January 3, 1997. I, Faraj Sarkuhi, am writing this note in great haste in the hope that one day someone will read it, and then the Iranian and international public (and especially my loved ones) will learn of the terrifying

experiences I have had. This note may never reach anyone. But I am hopeful that someone will read it and after my arrest or death will publish it so that there will be a testament to my pain and suffering.

I was arrested at Mehrabad Airport on November 3, 1996, and held in one of the Ministry of Information's secret prisons until December 20. I don't know how long I have. I expect to be arrested again at any second or to be murdered in such a way that it looks like suicide. Torture, prison, and death are what await me. I've fallen victim to a plan that the Ministry of Information has devised and is still in the process of carrying out. I don't know what will happen next.

**I**n early November, Mr. Hashemi, an agent for the Ministry of Information, called me and told me that I would finally be able to obtain an exit visa and leave the country. I did not doubt Mr. Hashemi's words—I missed my wife and children, who are in Germany, and I was very anxious to see them. I thought that maybe the regime had concluded that there was no advantage to their barring me from travel. I should explain here the mind-set that allowed me and others like me to become the Ministry's pawns. First, we thought that there were two factions in this regime and that the Ministry of Information was controlled by the faction that did not support the policy of pressuring intellectuals. Second, I had not partici-



parted in my covert political activities, my work was concerned with literary and cultural matters and was done in the open. I knew I hadn't done anything wrong, so I naively assumed they wouldn't do anything to me.

I bought a ticket for Germany. On Novem-

ber 3, I went to the airport with my friend Parvin Ardalan. Mr. Hashemi had called me the day before and told me to meet him at the exchange booth prior to my flight. Another official showed up there and took me to a room in the airport. Mr. Hashemi was there, and he gave me exit forms to fill out, which I did. Then he took my passport and the money for my exit tax. Fifteen minutes later, he arrested me. I was blindfolded and taken by car to one of the Ministry of Information's secret prisons. The main phase of their plan was under way.

During their interrogations I learned that they had tampered with my passport and put someone else's face in place of mine. That person was given my foreign-currency allowance, shopped at the airport, then went to Hamburg using my passport, which now had a German entry stamp. Later, I found out they had told Parvin that my flight had been delayed, that I was now flying on Lufthansa, and that she should call Germany and tell my family and friends not to meet me at the airport as planned. On the first or second day they told me, "It has been officially announced that you have left Iran, and your entry into Germany has been documented at the Hamburg airport. You will remain in solitary confinement for a while. After the interrogations, interviews, and other inquiries are completed, we will kill you and bury you secretly—or we will dump your body in Germany." On the third or fourth day they played me a recorded telephone conversation between my brother Esmail and my wife, Farideh, in which he told her that Mehrabad Airport had officially documented my departure from Iran.

The pressure began to intensify. I had been condemned to death and felt there was no hope. I wasn't an official prisoner. I had "disappeared" without a trace. My situation was different from that of the other prisoners, even those who were also condemned to death. A prisoner, even on death row, can hope for amnesty, can write a letter or draft a will. But the decision to eliminate me was final and irrevocable. My departure from the country had been announced. I felt as though I had been buried alive.

Their interrogations and torture began on the first day and continued until the last. Part of the interrogations concerned cultural matters, about which I could write my opinion. Other questions concerned my life and the history of the groups I'd been involved with. These questions were not difficult to answer, since the work of these groups had not been secret or covert. I subsequently discovered that their main objective was not to gain information through interrogations but to stage what

[Foreign Aid]

## THE GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

*From "Recycled Weapons: American Exports of Surplus Arms, 1990–1995," a study conducted last year by the Federation of American Scientists. By law, the Pentagon may give, lease, or sell weapons it no longer needs to those countries where such equipment "will strengthen the security of the United States and promote world peace." The arms below were given to recipient countries for free.*

BAHRAIN: 2 cargo planes, 6 observation planes, 22 attack helicopters, 8 surface-to-air missile launchers, 60 surface-to-air missiles, 60 tanks, 117 grenade launchers, 2,000 pistols

BANGLADESH: 12 attack planes

BOTSWANA: 2 cargo planes, 12 observation planes

BRAZIL: 91 tanks

COLOMBIA: 3 cargo planes, 8 attack planes

EGYPT: 1 fighter plane, 30 surface-to-air missile launchers, 700 tanks, 5,000 grenade launchers, 10,000 rifles

GREECE: 48 fighter planes, 82 attack planes, 17 attack helicopters, 144 surface-to-air missiles, 150 armored personnel carriers, 672 tanks, 2,469 grenade launchers, 111 rifles, 3,511 pistols

ISRAEL: 3 fighter planes, 10 attack planes, 24 attack helicopters, 35 antiaircraft vehicles, 2,496 grenade launchers, 64,744 rifles

MOROCCO: 240 tanks, 300 submachine guns, 1,298 pistols

OMAN: 20 antiaircraft vehicles, 30 tanks

PORTUGAL: 80 tanks

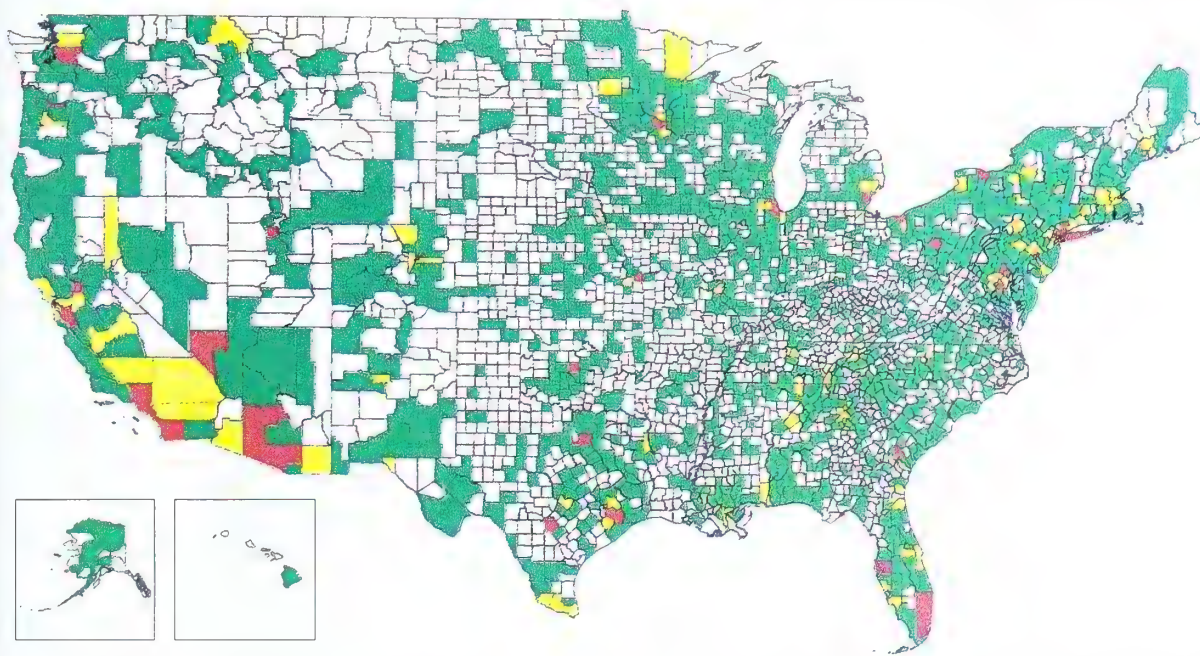
SOUTH KOREA: 275 tanks

TUNISIA: 5 cargo planes, 10 antisubmarine helicopters

TURKEY: 38 fighter planes, 29 antisubmarine planes, 6 observation planes, 28 attack helicopters, 529 surface-to-air missiles, 126 air-to-air missiles, 133 antiaircraft vehicles, 250 armored personnel carriers, 922 tanks



## LISTENING IN



This map of electronic surveillance activity by federal, state, and local officials was part of a report issued in January by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In order to prove to Congress that law-enforcement agencies need increased access to newly developed digital phone networks, the FBI released previously undisclosed information regarding the frequency of "simultaneous intercept activity"—wiretappings (which capture conversations taking place on a telephone line), pen registers (which record the numbers dialed from a particular phone line), and trap and traces (which identify the number and location of incoming calls to a line)—for the period of January 1, 1993, through March 1, 1995. For each county, the FBI determined the number of intercepts that occurred on the area's peak day for surveillance activity. On the map, red indicates that a county's maximum figure fell between 76 and 1,080 intercepts in one day; yellow indicates 26 to 75 intercepts; green indicates 1 to 25 intercepts; and white indicates that no intercepts occurred.

they called "interviews." For these, they first tormented me until I broke down, then they exerted intense pressure on me to memorize texts they had prepared and recite them before a video camera.

The interviews were mainly about espionage. They forced me to say that I had spied for Manville, the first secretary of the French embassy, and for Gust, the cultural attaché from the German embassy, and that I was being paid by both of them, and that Manville and Gust dictated the ideological content of my magazine. They repeatedly beat me until I performed credibly. They filmed the interviews several times until they were satisfied, and each time they made me plead for clemency and forgiveness. They forced me to talk about other writers and to say that I had had sexual relations with several women, some of whom I had never met in my life.

Some may wonder why I gave in to such humiliation, why I did whatever they asked. Pris-

oners who take part in forced interviews sometimes harbor hopes of diminished sentences if they cooperate, but that wasn't the case for me. My "interviews" were part of a plan that would ultimately result in my murder, and I wanted them to finish what they were doing quickly, and then kill me so that I would be freed from the torture and madness. Many times I wrote letters to them on the interrogation sheets, begging them to kill me or give me something with which I could take my own life.

I was in prison, buried alive, facing death. I had spent eight years in the Shah's prisons; I had been arrested several times during his reign. But all of those eight years do not compare in pain and distress with a mere five minutes from these forty-seven days.

**H**aving completed the interviews, I was told that they would release me for a while on the condition that I do exactly as they said. I accepted. Anything—even death or re-arrest



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(which will undoubtedly come within the next few days)—seemed preferable to the situation I was in. They told me that they planned to let me reappear at Mehrabad Airport and be interviewed by journalists, and I agreed. They told me what to say and how to respond to questions. I did the interview and it was published. I was also interviewed by the BBC and French Radio, and I told them what I had been ordered to say. [Sarkuhi told reporters that he had been traveling in Germany and Turkmenistan.]

On December 20, after the airport interview, I was ostensibly released, but I am under constant surveillance. I have repeated to everyone, even my brother, what I said at the airport. I have not told anyone the truth. There is absolutely nothing I can do. I know that they will eventually recapture and imprison me or kill me.

With everything at their disposal—their infiltrators among political activists and intellectuals, their fabricated interviews, and the German passport stamp—the truth of what they've done to me will be destroyed. I don't know what else to write. The end is near.

Should this letter come into anyone's possession, please make sure that it reaches my wife within three days after my arrest or one day after my death, so that she can get it published. If no one finds this, I will be dead anyway. In reality, I died on November 3. I love my wife and children with all my heart.

[Goals]

## CLINTON'S COLOR GUARD

*From a report prepared in January 1996 by the White House's African American Working Group, then headed by Deputy Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, who is now the White House's nominee for labor secretary. The group's objective, as stated in the report, was to mobilize "the African American community in 1996 to assure the re-election of President Clinton"; among other strategies, the group planned to "ensure that African Americans are well represented in all aspects of the campaign." According to the White House, the report was only "a wish list."*

### STEERING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. African Americans should be hired for the following senior management positions with the campaign:

- Deputy Campaign Manager for Constituent Affairs

- Assistant Deputy Campaign Manager for Finance
- Assistant Deputy Campaign Manager for Communications
- Assistant Deputy Campaign Manager for African Americans
- GOTV [Get Out the Vote] Director

2. African Americans should also be well represented in senior field positions. The following table presents our recommendations for the placement of African Americans in key positions throughout the campaign:

State	Clinton Gore State Director	Clinton Gore Press Secretary	Coordinating Campaign State Director	CC Political Field Director	CC GOTV Director
Ala.					
Ark.			Black		Black
Calif.				Black	Black
Colo.					Black
Conn.		Black			
Del.					
D.C.	Black		Black	Black	Black
Fla.				Black	Black
Ga.				Black	Black
Ill.				Black	Black
Ky.				Black	
La.			Black		Black
Md.	Black				Black
Mass.					
Mich.		Black			Black
Minn.				Black	
Miss.			Black		Black
Mo.		Black		Black	Black
Nev.				Black	
N.J.		Black		Black	Black
N.Y.			Black	Black	Black
N.C.			Black		
Ohio	Black			Black	Black
Oreg.					
Pa.				Black	Black
S.C.	Black				Black
Tenn.				Black	Black
Tex.		Black			Black
Va.		Black		Black	Black
Wash.				Black	
Wis.				Black	Black

We are not yet ready to recommend specific names to fill the field positions in the table above, since local politics, the makeup of the state steering committees, and other such issues will affect who is eventually hired. However, identifying qualified African Americans should not be a problem.





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"Beijing Time No. 1" by Zhu Wei from the series China Diary. Zhu's work is currently on display at the Plum Blossoms Gallery in Singapore. Zhu lives in Beijing.

[Proposal]

## AFFIRMATIVE REACTION

*From White Male Applicant: An Affirmative Action Expose, by William A. Whitaker, published by Apropos Press in Smyrna, Delaware*

ALL Americans are supposed to be considered equal, but thanks to decades of affirmative action, we have created a new kind of inequality in the workforce. This attempt at "leveling the playing field" has merely increased the odds that poorly qualified candidates will be hired or promoted over those with superior credentials—often male Caucasian Americans. Government and large employers must return to merit selection. We need a new system that will be inoffensive to all candidates.

In order to accomplish this goal, governments and large businesses must create a Promotion Control Office. Its task would be to strip the promotion-review process of all indi-

cations of candidates' race, sex, age, religion, and so on. All candidates for promotion would send their application materials directly to the Promotion Control Office. Apart from removing Social Security numbers, home addresses, and telephone numbers from the applications, the office would assign pseudonyms to applicants to prevent gender and/or personal-identity disclosure. It would make cryptic alterations to résumés in order to prevent applicants from providing affirmative action "cue cards" to the review board, such as "Vice President of the Women's Club" or "Secretary of the NAACP."

The promotion control officer would then set up interviews with promotion finalists and the selecting official. These interviews, however, would not be done in person but rather with a camera and monitor. The monitor would be screen-scrambled to prevent gender or race recognition, and the voices of the applicants would be computer-altered. Hue could be added or removed in an effort to unify all applicants' color. As an additional guarantee, applicants would wear a uniform outer garment, possibly a smock, to prevent gender identification.



The promotion would go to the individual who gave the best responses, based on a numerical value rating, to each question. In the event that a selection is challenged through the Equal Employment Office or other channels, a tape of the interview as well as the candidate's numerical ranking would be readily available for review.

[Tally]

## EVERYONE'S PRICE (PUBLIC SECTOR)

From "Cashing In: A Guide to Money, Votes, and Public Policy in the 104th Congress," a report issued in January by the Center for Responsive Politics in Washington, D.C. The center analyzed recent votes in the House and Senate according to campaign contributions given to members of Congress by political action committees.

Bill before Senate: Farm Bill, February 7, 1996—Kill proposal to phase out the federal peanut subsidy program. A yes vote benefits peanut growers.

### 1991-96 Peanut PAC Contributions

VOTE	VOTE TALLY	AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION
Yes	59	\$2,720
No	36	\$306

Bill before Senate: Fiscal 1996 Budget Resolution, May 25, 1995—Kill proposal to raise tobacco taxes and use revenue for health care funding and for programs to help tobacco farmers convert to new crops. A yes vote benefits the tobacco industry.

### 1991-96 Tobacco PAC Contributions

VOTE	VOTE TALLY	AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION
Yes	62	\$19,003
No	38	\$2,436

Bill before House: Fiscal 1997 Interior Appropriations, June 20, 1996—Stop funds for the current emergency salvage timber program, which permits the logging of dead or dying trees on federal land without allowing for environmental challenges. A no vote benefits the timber industry.

### 1995-96 Timber PAC Contributions

VOTE	VOTE TALLY	AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION
Yes	209	\$542
No	211	\$2,415

Bill before Senate: Alaska Power Administration Sale, November 14, 1995—Lift ban on the ex-

port of crude oil from Alaska's North Slope. A yes vote benefits oil and gas companies.

### 1991-96 Oil & Gas PAC Contributions

VOTE	VOTE TALLY	AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION
Yes	69	\$64,460
No	29	\$12,002

Bill before House: Fiscal 1996 Defense Appropriations, September 7, 1995—Cut \$493 million for continued production of the B-2 bomber, manufactured by Northrop Grumman. A no vote benefits Northrop Grumman.

### 1995-96 Northrop PAC Contributions

VOTE	VOTE TALLY	AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION
Yes	210	\$113
No	213	\$2,073

[Survey]

## EVERYONE'S PRICE (PRIVATE SECTOR)

From a study conducted by economist Robert Frank in which he asked graduating seniors at Cornell University how much additional salary they would require, all other conditions being equal, to accept the hypothetical jobs in column B rather than those in column A. Frank's findings appeared in the July 1996 issue of The Southern Economic Journal.

JOB A	JOB B	EXTRA SALARY REQUIRED
Recruiter for Peace Corps	Recruiter for Exxon	\$13,037/yr.
Accountant for large art museum	Accountant for large petrochemical company	\$14,185/yr.
Language teacher for local high school	Language teacher for CIA	\$18,679/yr.
Ad copywriter for American Cancer Society	Ad copywriter for Camel cigarettes	\$24,333/yr.
Lawyer for Sierra Club	Lawyer for National Rifle Association	\$37,129/yr.



*Hill Country Times*: Assault Weapon Ban Repeal. Final Passage, March 22, 1996—Repeal the ban on assault weapons. A yes vote benefits criminals, traps. A no vote benefits gun control groups.

1995 GOP/AG Contributions

	VOTE	AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION	AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION
		DEMOCRATS	REPUBLICANS
Yes	239	\$4,450	\$2
No	173	\$33	\$280

[Conversation]

## LBJ'S FIRST SECOND THOUGHTS

*From the transcript of a telephone call on Mar. 27, 1964 between President Lyndon B. Johnson and McGeorge Bundy, his national security adviser. A year later, Johnson began the large-scale deployment of troops to Vietnam. The transcript was released in February by the Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, Texas.*

LYNDON B. JOHNSON: I stayed awake last night thinking of this, and I don't know why in the hell we—looks to me like we're getting into another Korea. It just worries the hell out of me. I don't see what we can ever hope to get out of this once we're committed.

MCGEORGE BUNDY: Once—

JOHNSON: I believe that the Chinese Communists are coming into it. I don't think that we can fight them 10,000 miles away from home. I don't think that it's worth fighting for, and I don't think that we can get out. It's just the biggest damn mess that I ever saw.

BUNDY: It is an awful mess.

JOHNSON: And we just have to think about—I'm looking at this sergeant of mine, he has six little kids, and he's getting out my things, and bringing in my night reading, and that kind of stuff, and I just thought about his kids. What in the hell am I ordering them out there for? It just doesn't seem worth a damn bit to me.

BUNDY: One thing, though—

JOHNSON: What is Laos worth to me? What is Laos worth to this country? We've got to free it, but hell, everybody else has got to free it out there, and they're not doing [anything] about it.

BUNDY: Yeah, yeah—

JOHNSON: Of course, if you start running [from] the Communists, they may just chase you right into your own kitchen.

BUNDY: Yeah, that's the trouble. If this thing comes apart with us—that's the dilemma, that's exactly the dilemma.

JOHNSON: But this is a terrible thing that we're getting ready to do.

BUNDY: Mr. President, I'm not telling you today what I'd do in your position. I just think that the most that we have to do with it is pray for a while.

JOHNSON: Did you see the poll this morning? Sixty-five percent of them don't know anything about it, and of those that do, the majority think that we're mishandling it. But they don't know what to do.

BUNDY: Yeah, yeah—

JOHNSON: That's Gallup. It's damn easy to get into a war, but it's going to be harder to ever extricate yourself if we get in.

[Scene]

## THE BOMBAY RUSH

*From "Mumbai," by Suketu Mehta, in the Spring issue of Granta, a special issue devoted to India. Mehta, who grew up in Bombay, now lives in New York City.*

**B**ombay is a city with an identity crisis, a city experiencing both a boom and a civic emergency. It's the biggest, fastest, richest city in India; by the year 2020, it is predicted, Bombay will be the largest city in the world. It held 12 million people at last count—more than Greece—and 38 percent of the nation's taxes are paid by its citizens. Yet half the population is homeless. In the Bayview Bar of the Oberoi Hotel you can order Dom Pérignon champagne for 20,250 rupees, more than one and a half times the average citizen's annual income, and this in a city where 40 percent of the houses are without safe drinking water. In a country where people still die of starvation, Bombay boasts 150 diet clinics. It's a city of glaring extremes and awesome divisions.

The manager of Bombay's suburban railway system was recently asked when the system would improve to a point where it could carry its 5 million daily passengers in comfort. "Not in my lifetime," he answered. Certainly, if you commute into Bombay, you are made aware of the precise temperature of the human body; it curls around you on all sides, adjusts itself to every curve of your own. A lover's embrace was never so close.

One morning I took the rush-hour train to the suburb of Jogeshwari. There was a crush of





From Sarajevo: Renaissance of a City, a series by London photographer Tom Stoddart. The photograph was on display in April at the Royal Festival Hall in London.

passengers, and I could get only halfway into the car. As the train gathered speed, I hung on to the top of the open door. I feared I would be pushed out, but someone reassured me: "Don't worry, if they push you out they will also pull you in."

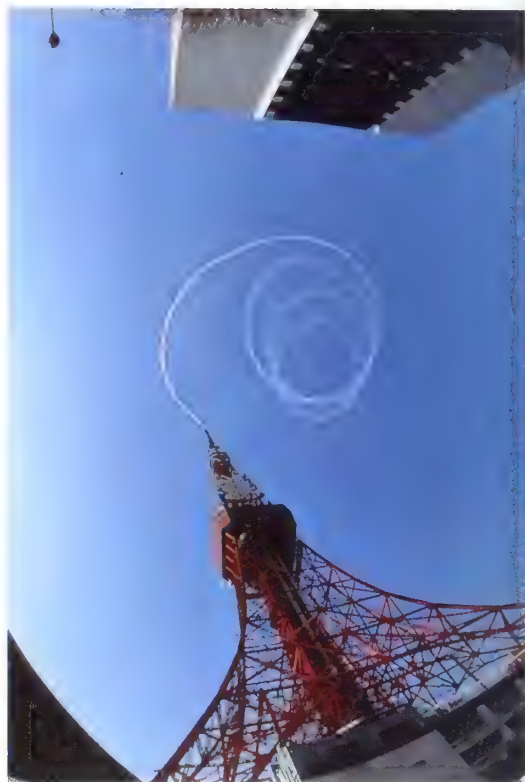
I recently spoke to a man I know who has seen firsthand the slow destruction of the social fabric of the city. He is from Bhagalpur, in Bihar, site not only of some of the worst Hindu versus Muslim violence in the nation but also of a famous incident in 1980 in which the police blinded a group of criminals with knitting needles and acid. This man, more than most people I know, has seen humanity at its worst. I asked him if he felt pessimistic about the human race.

"Not at all," he replied. "Look at the hands from the trains."

If you are late for work in Bombay and reach the station just as the train is leaving the platform, you can run up to the packed compartments and find many hands unfolding outward from the train like petals, reaching out to pull you on board. As you run alongside you will be

picked up, and some tiny space will be made for your feet at the edge of the open doorway. The rest is up to you; you will probably have to hang on to the door frame with your fingertips, taking care not to lean out too far lest you get decapitated by a pole placed close to the tracks. But consider what has happened: your fellow passengers, already packed tighter than the law allows cattle to be packed, their shirts drenched with sweat in the badly ventilated compartment, having stood like this for hours, retain an empathy for you, know that your boss might yell at you or cut your pay if you miss this train, and will make space for you where none exists. And at the moment of contact, they do not know if the hand that is reaching for theirs belongs to a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian or a Brahmin or an Untouchable, or whether you were born in this city or arrived only this morning, or whether you live in Malabar Hill or Jogeshwari, whether you're from Bombay or New York. All they know is that you're trying to get to the city of gold, and that's enough. Come on board, they say. We'll adjust.





"Smoke Signal" and "Tower of Babel," two "sky paintings" by Chinese-born artist Niu Bo. Niu hires skywriting planes to fly over monuments (such as the Statue of Liberty and the Tokyo Tower, shown above) in shapes and patterns of his design. Photographs of his work will be on display in September at Z Gallery in New York City. Niu lives in Tokyo.

[Appreciation]

## URBAN DELIGHT

From "The Wonders of Salvage," a lecture given by Ben Katchor in January at the City University Graduate Center in New York City. Katchor draws the syndicated comic strip "Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer." He lives in New York City.

**T**he *Chicago Yellow Pages* for the year 1960 is one of my favorite books. This is from a chapter called "Artificial Flowers and Plants":

ROYAL HOLLAND'S FLORAL FOLIO. Importers of polyethylene, completely washable, flowers and foliage. They look real, they smell real. 5236 N. Southport, GRowchill 2-2626.

And under "Barbers":

ROYAL HOLLAND'S FLORAL FOLIO. For men only. Styling, waves, tints. Not a Barber shop. 52 W. Randolph, STate 2-6944.

It goes on like this for 2,000 pages.

I've been able to trace my interest in the *Yellow Pages* back to my childhood in Brooklyn. I

fondly recall that time of the year when the phone books' bindings began to buckle and collapse under their own weight; when the distinction between the white and yellow pages became unclear; when the old phone books had to be harvested to make room for the new ones.

I was born in 1951, at the tail end of a brief, but brilliant, period of secular Yiddish culture in New York City. My father and his friends all spoke Yiddish and all had strong utopian-socialist or communist leanings. Lying in bed on a Sunday afternoon, my father would read to me from the humor column of the Yiddish, communist paper, the *Morning Freiheit*, jokes that I now only half-remember: a landlord discovering the bowel movement of his tenant in the morning newspaper; pranks played upon the elder members of a Jewish burial society; the ridiculous lengths to which some people would go to earn a living; other people discovering diamonds inside freshly caught carp. And then there were the aphorisms, such as: "Capitalism is like a broom—it sweeps the world clean and always stays in a dirty corner."

I grew up with the idea that everything I saw around me was, in the end, economically deter-



mined; that everything would be different if the nation's wealth were more equitably distributed. Exactly how an economic reshuffling of the world would affect the details of my childhood—how a Pepsi-Cola could taste differently, how a brisket of beef sandwich could be improved upon—this they didn't go into. My father and his friends looked at the city as though they were tourists from some more rational world. To them, the rich urban culture I basked in was the product of some businessmen trying to cut corners, save a few dollars, and reduce overhead.

And yet, of all the worlds possible under capitalism, it was odd to me that things turned out the way they did. I wondered:

Was there a secret logic to the arrangement of stores along any avenue? Why a pizzeria next to a surgical supply store? Why did these strange brotherhoods of competing businessmen cluster in certain areas of the city—the linoleum district, the bad sportswear district? And why did I derive such a great sense of comfort from contemplating the delivery of mail, the routing of buses, the restaurant specials of the week, and other vast processes of city life?

For ten years, I worked in a typesetting business in downtown Manhattan. Each night, I'd see the fruits of my labor littering the sidewalks of lower Broadway: a take-out menu from Danny's Down Under Deli; a three-fold brochure reminding voters of the virtues of a certain judge; a page torn from a booklet on "Iridology: The Lost Science of Eyeball Reading"; a label from a bag of assorted kosher candies.

And now, after eight years as an urban cartoonist, I wonder:

Will I live to see the establishment of public mustard fountains on the streets of our great cities?

Who will see to it that the eternal flame continues to burn under the sauerkraut tray at each corner hot-dog stand—a reminder of the necessity for cheap food?

Will the Drowned Men's Association succeed in establishing a bus service—to depart each evening at five—by means of which anyone can pack a bag and, without shame, retreat from this economy to an upstate utopian resort? We call it The Hotel Good Riddance: a rambling wooden structure nestled on fifty acres of unspoiled greenery. Here, each guest, free from all social and economic pressures, can calmly reflect upon the events of his former life. The humiliating circumstances and bitter struggles of the recent past now become the curious subjects of nostalgic reverie. For a donation of \$150, you can provide one guest with a year's room and board. A donation of \$50 will, in part, enable us to purchase 500 pounds of

sunflower seeds, 10,000 used books, 4,000 pounds of pickled herring in cream sauce, 2,000 ballpoint pens, seven accordions, a new set of tires for our bus, a crate of facial-quality tissue, 1,000 citronella candles, and an inexhaustible supply of lightbulbs for our twenty-four-hour library and snack bar.

Take a moment to consider what you can afford.

[Scandal]

## A TEXAS TRAGEDY

*From complaints sent recently to the Texas Cosmetology Commission by customers of various nail salons throughout the state. In January, State Senator Jane Nelson (R., Flower Mound) announced that in response to "thousands" of complaints received by the commission she would introduce legislation to "crack down on 'manicure mills.'" Nelson said that her bill would "protect women who go into a nail salon expecting a treat, not a painful nightmare which could threaten their lives." Portions of the letters appeared in the February 14 issue of The Texas Observer.*

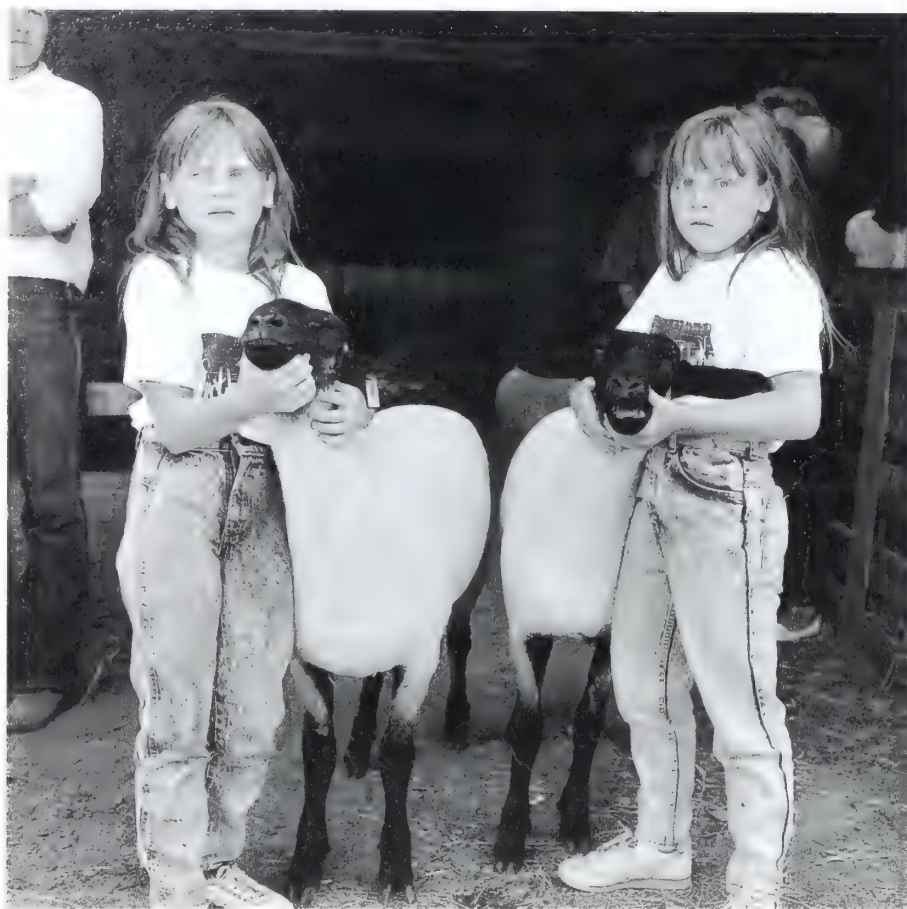
**O**n Wednesday, January 24, 1996, I had a 5:30 P.M. appointment for a "fill." I was attended to by a girl known as "Melinda." However, her license stated a Vietnamese birth name. I had three nails that needed to be repaired. Melinda grabbed my hand and looked at my nails and said in a very authoritative and scolding manner, "You broke three nails!"

I have been getting my nails done for years now, and I can truly say that this was the worst experience I have ever had. Not once did Melinda strike up a general conversation, or introduce herself, or even offer me her business card. While working on me she received personal phone calls. In addition, one of her friends was in the salon and literally hung over her workstation, invading my personal space.

When Melinda gave me my fill, she glopped the acrylic compound all over my nail. It was running all down the nail. I realize that the procedure for doing a fill can be messy, but to say that it was ridiculously sloppy would be an understatement. At that point in my frustration, I knew that this person was either an amateur or unlicensed. I asked her politely, "How long have you been doing nails?" She replied, "One year." I thought to myself, "It shows."

Melinda finally began to shape and file the nails. My normal shape is the squared-off tip, which gives the nail a rectangular look. By the time Melinda was finished, my nails looked like





*"Griggs County Fair, Cooperstown, North Dakota" from the series In Search of the Corn Queen, by Greta Pratt. The photograph was on display in March at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis. Pratt lives in Brooklyn, New York.*

uneven, multiple-sized triangles. While I was still sitting in my seat, she asked me, "What color do you want?" Well, she was not done with my nails yet, so I could not even get up and look at the color selection. The proper way to say it would have been, "You can select a color now." It is my belief that sometimes it is not what you say but how you say it.

I would like to reiterate that I have been getting my nails done for a very long time, and never have I experienced such rudeness and unprofessionalism.

Andrea S. Davila

Top Nails is filthy! I was completely shocked when it was time to do my pedicure to find that they had only one towel. It was a dirty pink towel that they expected you to put your clean feet on. The bathroom where clients must wash their hands looked like a roadside bathroom that had not been tended to in months. There was a car hood in the back room. One of the

manicurists had caught a very young wild bird—I'm sure it was a rescue, since we have had many severe storms of late. However, this animal was hopping around all over the place. While I was there, one of the manicurists got tired of the bird and decided to put it out. She left her client, caught the bird, and did in fact put it out. She never gave a thought to washing her hands before returning to her customer. The customer had to tell her to go wash her hands!

It is awful. Please do something about these dirty conditions.

Debra Creasy

I'm writing to you concerning my left index finger. This problem started at ProNails. I went in to get my fill on a Saturday, and the following Monday my finger began to throb intensely. I've had swelling and discoloration in the finger, and severely bad, bad pain, nonstop. It continues to this day. This problem keeps me from writing or doing anything else, especially



at work. I've had to take time off from work with no pay. Enclosed are some pictures of the injured finger.

Trina L. Smith

On a Saturday afternoon my sister and I went to P. L. Nails to get a full set of nails. It took four hours to get my nails done. I have been to other salons and it usually takes only one hour. When the manicurist was done my nails looked horrible, and I mentioned it to him, but I was so tired and frustrated that I just paid so I could go home.

I returned to the salon Monday evening and asked for Kim, the owner, to show him how badly my nails had been done. He laughed and said they would fix my nails for \$10. I told him that I was not going to pay anything, because my nails were not done right in the first place. You could see (after one day) that each acrylic nail was separating from my nail at the cuticle.

Kim asked me where I usually get my nails done. I told him off of Buckner, and he told me that I should go there next time. This remark offended me, so I gave him a piece of my mind. I told him that in America we can go anywhere we want, when we want. He yelled at me to get out of his store, so I left to gain control of myself.

Gwen Chambers

[Diatribes]

## AN ILL-BEGOTTEN ENTERPRISE

*From Harlan Ellison's introduction to The City on the Edge of Forever—The Original Teleplay that Became the Classic Star Trek Episode, published last fall by White Wolf Publishing. In 1966, Ellison wrote "The City on the Edge of Forever," in which crew members travel back to Earth in the 1930s. His version of the script, the only teleplay ever to win a Hugo Award for science fiction, was then rewritten several times, in part by Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry, before the episode aired in April 1967. According to Ellison, Roddenberry, who died in 1991, claimed publicly that "he had saved 'City'" from Ellison's original script.*

I tried to let it pass. But thirty years is much longer to keep getting kicked in the ass than anyone should have to put up with. For thirty years I've had to listen to others shoot off their faces about how they saved "City." How they rewrote this and trimmed that and suffered oh so awfully with the irresponsible Ellison. And now, with Shatner's pinheaded memoir, and that

[Remembrance]

## ROYAL TREATMENT

*From The Book of Eulogies: A Collection of Memorial Tributes, Poetry, Essays, and Letters of Condolence, edited by Phyllis Theroux, to be published this month by Scribner. The following description of Queen Anne, who ruled England from 1702 until her death in 1714, was written by Sarah, Duchess of Marlboro, the Queen's adviser and childhood friend.*

Queen Anne had a person and appearance not at all ungraceful, till she grew exceeding gross and corpulent. There was something of majesty in her look, but it was mixed with a sudden and constant frown that plainly betrayed a gloominess of soul and a cloudiness of disposition within.

Her memory was exceeding great, almost to a wonder, and had these two particularities very remarkable in it: that she could, whenever she pleased, forget what others would have thought themselves obliged by truth and honor to remember, and remember all such things as others would think it a happiness to forget. Indeed, she chose to retain in it very little besides ceremonies and customs of courts and suchlike insignificant trifles.

Her friendships were flames of extravagant passion, ending in indifferences or aversion. Her love to the prince seemed in the eye of the world to be prodigiously great; and great as was the passion of her grief, her stomach was greater, for that very day he died she ate three very large and hearty meals, so that one would think that as other persons' grief takes away their appetites, her appetite took away her grief.

She loved fawning and adoration, and hated plain dealing, even in the most important cases. She had a soul that nothing could so effectually move as flattery or fear. She had no native generosity of temper, nor was often known to do a handsome action either as a reward or as a piece of friendship. The diligence and faithfulness of a servant signified but little with her, where she had no passion for the person. In a word, she had little zeal for the happiness of others and at last preferred her own humor and passion before the safety and happiness of her own people and of all Europe, which she had either not sense enough to see or not goodness enough to regard. Whether her memory will be celebrated by posterity with blessings or curses, time will show.



and look like tuckin' by David Alexander that ~~must~~ make Roddenberry look like tuckin' Prometheus, I let myself get talked into publishing the original, unexpurgated, you-read-it-and-judge-for-yourself teleplay, with additional materials, and this is my final word on the matter. If it makes money, that's terrific: I deserve it (a lot more than the creeps who've fed off my work for three decades). And if it doesn't, well, what are the odds all the brain-damaged Trekkies wanted to hear the truth anyhow?

Maybe after all of this I'll still suffer the Curse of Roddenberry—the supreme, overwhelming egocentricity that could not permit him to admit that anyone else in his mad-god universe was capable of grandeur, of expertise, of rectitude. And his hordes of Trekkie believers, and his pig-snout associates who knew whence their river of gold flowed, they protected and buttressed him.

Indeed, if it weren't for the money, for that overflowing *Star Trek* trough in which the pig snouts are dipped every day, no one would give a rat's ass if the truth about Roddenberry and the show got told. But if you follow the money, you see that river of gold flowing straight off the Paramount lot in boring sequel-series after clone-show, and you see the merchandisers and the franchisers and the publicists and the QVC hustlers and the bought critics like *TV Guide's* Jeff Jarvis, and you see the fan-magazine fanatics and the convention throwers and the endless weary biographies and the huge pseudo-book franchise of useless *Star Trek* novels written by a great many writers who ought to take up flyspeck analysis instead of littering the bestseller lists with their poor excuses for creative effort (not to mention the few really excellent writers who ought to know better but have gulled themselves into believing they're writing those awful turd-tomes out of adolescent affection for nothing nobler than a god-damn *TV show*, when the truth is they're doing it for the money, just like all the other *Star Trek* barnacles attached to that lumbering behemoth); and you see the venal liars and adulterers and con artists and charlatans and deluded fan-fools who have a vested interest in keeping *Star Trek* sailing along, and you figure, Ah what the hell, Ellison, let it go! Just forget about it!

But if you read all of this book, I have the faint and joyless hope that at last, after all this time, you will understand why I despise the mendacious fuckers who have twisted the story and retold it to the glory of someone who didn't deserve it, at the expense of a writer who worked his ass off to create something original, and why it was necessary—after thirty years—to expend over 45,000 words to justify being the only person on the face of the earth who won't let Gene Roddenberry rest in peace.

[Fiction]

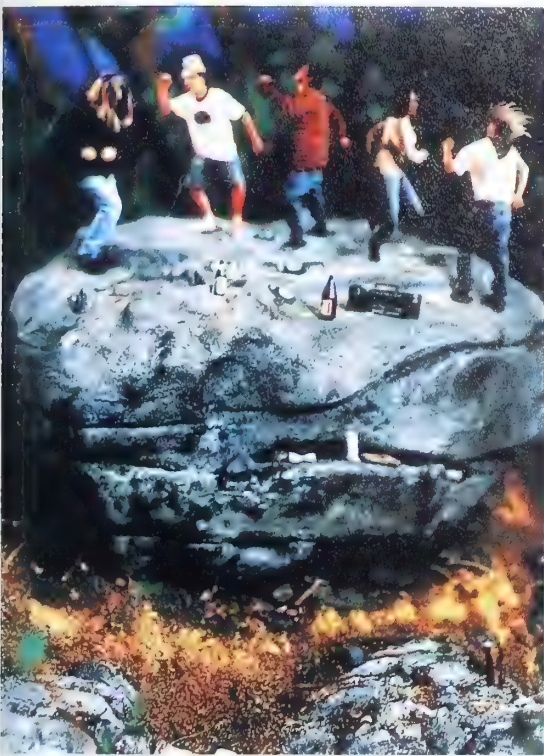
## THE DISCLAIMER

By Ron Carlson. Carlson read the story in February at Arizona State University. His collection of stories, *The Hotel Eden*, will be published this month by W. W. Norton.

**T**his is a work of fiction, and any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is merely coincidental, except for the restaurant I call the Wild Chicken, which was a real place actually called the Blue Bird, a drive-in fast-food joint I always drove past on my way to Debbie Delucca's house. I loved the Blue Bird, all the lights on late at night, because I knew that I was going to get a cheeseburger or the vanilla shake, so many of which I enjoyed with Debbie Delucca herself, or alone if I was driving back late from her house wrecked from all the couch time with her. The couch time I put in the book was real too, as well as the couch, a kind of overstuffed nappy sofa with Debbie's mother's big red and blue afghan on the back, a blanket that wanted to get caught in the gears and dragged into the evening's activities quietly and inextricably, a beautiful bold coverlet with a repeated pattern of red geese against a blue sky. Of course the Blue Bird, which I have called the Wild Chicken, and where I stood so many midnights under the fluorescent lights picking red and blue threads out of my hair waiting for a cheeseburger and a vanilla shake, is now a Custom Tile Outlet, a place you can go if you want your fireplace to look like the one in any Hilton.

I also should add here that Debbie Delucca's house is based on her real house, a green-sided bungalow on the corner of Concord Street and Eighth South that had a long shallow porch where I stood so many nights whispering with Debbie, giving Mrs. Eisenhower across the street a little show, I suppose, as Debbie and I would stand some nights for an hour and some nights two, saying good-bye and I love you and I can't believe I've met someone like you and that was dreamy in there on the couch I love you so much, and other direct dialogue that I've used in the text absolutely verbatim, probably the easiest thing of all the things in this book to write because everything we said is alive within my head after all these years, things actually uttered on the chilly fall nights there on Concord Street and Eighth South, as we twisted closer, so lost some nights that time itself dissolved or collapsed, disappeared anyway, a phenomenon I describe better than that in the book, and a phenomenon that has not come round for me since





"Party on the Big Rock" and "Teenagers at Sunrise," dioramas built and photographed by New York City artist Jerald Framp-ton. The photographs were on display last December at the Clementine Gallery in New York City.

those intoxicating nights under the huge munificent blessing of the ancient poplar tree in her front yard, a real tree that held up the sky for half a mile in every direction, a giant that dumped its leaves in unending ten-ton squadrons that fell like some kind of perfect setting for us, a back-drop, a movie—if it could give up its ten million golden secrets, a blizzard of leaves, then we could be in love. That tree is long gone, as the house in which Debbie Delucca lived exists no longer, both bladed under for the Interstate years ago so that motorists now can exit there at Eighth South for easier access to the airport. I put that tree in the book; it was too big not to, but it is a tree we'll never any of us see again.

Nothing—no resemblance to actual events, coincidental or otherwise—is going to bring that tree back, or Debbie Delucca, who was my close associate all those years, the young person with whom I invented modern love, love as we know it. Love which so many people dabble in today, but do not study or understand or allow to course through their veins like some necessary thing the way that we did. We were the last people to use love right. Debbie Delucca is now Debbie Delucca Peterson somewhere in St. Clare, where she does who knows what. I can't imagine, though I've tried.

And what am I going to do, go into the ShopMart down there and run into her at the little lunch counter they've got over by the children's department as she sits quietly sipping some chicken noodle soup and reading this very book and nodding at how accurate every word is—the things she said, the things I said in return? And I'd sit down beside her and order a vanilla shake, not even wanting their fake version of one of the world's great treasures, which doesn't even have real ice cream or real vanilla, but wanting to say the words the way I did so many nights under the bright lights of the Blue Bird Cafe, *vanilla shake*, to see if she might turn to see who's talking like this, looking up from a book that I'm sorry now I even wrote, really sorry, because I see for the first time that you can't get anything back. No coincidence at some lunch counter and twenty minutes of conversation with a girl you once knew, some woman sitting there and you know the exact location of every mole on her body, is going to make one thing in this real world different. If you want the coincidence where some character based on me gets the amazing girl back and has his heart start again under the most beautiful tree on the continent after so many years, you're going to have to look in a book.





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# TOWARD AN END OF BLACKNESS

An argument for the  
surrender of race consciousness

By Jim Sleeper

**L**ast January, not long after the national furor over the decision by an Oakland school board to recognize "Ebonics," I happened upon a C-SPAN telecast of the awarding of seven Congressional Medals of Honor to black World War II veterans, each of whose "gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life" had been ignored for more than fifty years. President Clinton strode across the East Room of the White House to present the medals to Vernon Joseph Baker, seventy-seven, the only recipient still living, and to the others' families. "History has been made whole today," the President told the assembly. The honorees, he said, had "helped us find a way to become a more just, more free nation . . . more worthy of them and more true to its ideals."

History has not been made whole for American blacks, of course, and yet something almost archaic in the recipients' bearing and in the ceremony itself reminded me that none of us in the younger generations can say with certainty what an American wholeness might be or, within any such presumed wholeness, what blackness and whiteness might mean. If we have trouble thinking about race, possibly it's because we no longer know how to think about America itself.

At least Second Lieutenant Baker seemed to have less trouble fifty-two years ago than we do now. In April 1945, he single-handedly wiped out two German machine-gun nests in Viareggio, Italy, drew fire on himself to permit the evacuation of wounded comrades, and led his segregated battalion's advance through enemy minefields. Asked by reporters after

*Jim Sleeper, a former political columnist for the New York Daily News, is the author of The Closest of Strangers: J. Edgar Hoover and the Politics of Race in New York. This essay has been adapted from his new book, Liberal Racism, which will be published by Viking this summer.*



WITH ALL THAT IF RACE  
DISAPPEARED FROM OUR SOCIAL  
EQUATIONS, WE WOULD HAVE  
NOTHING OF VALUE TO SAY  
OR GIVE TO ONE ANOTHER

the Fort Ransom ceremony, whether he had ever given up hope of winning the medal, he "sounded surprised . . . as if the question presumed arrogance," said one report. "I never thought about getting it," Baker said. Asked why he had joined the army in the first place, Baker responded, "was a young black man without a job." Ah, yes, *that*. Prodded to comment on having risked his life for his country while in a segregated unit, he answered, "I was an angry young man. We were all angry. But we had a job to do, and we did it. . . . My personal thoughts were that I knew things would get better, and I'm happy I'm here to see it."

Asked what the ceremony meant to her, Arlene Fox, widow of First Lieutenant John Fox, who died in Italy in 1944, said, "I think it's more

than just what it means to this family. I think it sends a message . . . that when a man does his duty, his color isn't important."

Even in the prime of their anger, Baker and Fox, as well as the black leaders and writers of their generation, such as A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, did not urge the importance of color as much as they found color imposed on them in ways that affronted something in them that wasn't "of color" at all. Proud though they were of what black had endured and would overcome (as Baker "knew" they would), they believed, before most of

the rest of us, that after a long dalliance with a white manifest destiny the American republic would recognize no black or white sanction from God. In Baker's black 92nd Infantry Division, in Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and in countless churches, blacks found it within themselves to treat a society torn by racism not as inherently, eternally damned but as nevertheless worth joining and redeeming. Blacks who thought and acted that way shared with whites an important belief: not, alas, a consensus that racism was wrong but a deep certainty that, despite it, they were all bound passionately to the promise of the nation.

But what was that promise? It seems a long time now since the Smothers Brothers crooned "The Lord is colorblind" to what CBS must have assumed was a reasonably receptive national audience in the late 1960s. To day many of us would think such an audience naive or hypocritical, if not racist, it is almost as if any assertion that color isn't important insults what has come to be known as black pride. It is almost as if we fear that if race lost all weight in our social equations or disappeared entirely through interracial marriages and offspring, we would have nothing of value to say or give to one another. The problem is not that racism has grown stronger; it is that American civic life has become weaker—and not primarily because of racism. If we find it difficult to say that a black person's color isn't important, that is because we no longer know how to say that being an "American" is important—important enough to transcend racial identity in a classroom, in a jury room, or at the polls.



PHOTOGRAPH BY FREDERICK J. M. JONES



"An individual's moral character is formed by narrative and culture," writes the sociologist Alan Wolfe. "Contracts between us are not enforced by laws or economic incentives; people adhere to social contracts when they feel that behind the contract lies a credible story of who they are and why their fates are linked to those of others." But what is America's story, when Vernon Baker's and Arlene Fox's descendants can climb to the very summit of the American Mt. Parnassus only to find there Dick Morris, *Vanity Fair*, Dennis Rodman, Time Warner Inc., and a retinue of dancing pollsters? The old American story of white manifest destiny, thankfully gone, was coherent enough to give blacks enough moral footing and traction to undo its moral affronts. By comparison, our new stories (the space shuttle *Challenger*? *Forrest Gump*? curricular gardens of multicultural delight?) are incoherent—much like Bill Clinton, truly a man of our time. In 1963, James Baldwin wondered aloud why any black American would want "to be integrated into a burning house." Obviously, he was not proposing resegregation. What, then? How were black Americans to think about themselves? Baldwin's emigration to France left the question open. And so have we all.

**F**or a short while twenty years ago, Alex Haley's *Roots* seemed to offer an answer. Turning on an intrepid black American's report of an astonishing encounter with his African past, it promised to weave a recovered, emblematic black story into the American national narrative, whose promise, whatever it was, would become more coherent for resolving the contradictions in its black story line. The story of Haley's story is worth retracing, because *Roots* wound up demonstrating both that blackness has no reliable myth of its own and that the summit of the American Parnassus is bare.

Published late in 1976, *Roots* became the next year's top nonfiction bestseller (selling some 1.5 million copies in one year) after a record 130 million Americans saw the twelve-hour ABC miniseries it inspired. At least 250 colleges began offering credit courses based significantly on *Roots*. Travel agencies packaged back-to-Africa "*Roots*" tours. Even before TV had anointed Haley, I watched him tell a rapt audience of Harvard undergraduates, many of them black, of his meeting with the *griot*, or oral historian, of a village in Gambia from which, Haley said, his ancestor Kunta Kinte had been abducted to America in 1767. When he noted, as he had in the book, that the *griot* "had no way in the world to know that [his story's particulars] had just echoed what I had heard all through my boyhood years on my grandma's front porch in Henning, Tennessee," there were gasps, and then the packed Quincy House dining hall was awash in tears.

With this unprecedented return by a black American to the scene of the primal crime against his West African forebears—"an astonishing feat of genealogical detective work," Doubleday's original dust jacket had called it—the long, tortuous arc of black dispossession and yearning for a historic reckoning seemed, at last, to come home. *Roots* wasn't just Haley's own story; it was "a symbolic history of a people," he told a British reporter who raised doubts about its accuracy. "I, we, need a place called Eden. My people need a Pilgrim's Rock."

Indeed they did. The sudden lurch toward integration in the 1960s had disrupted old black coping strategies, scrambling the coordinates of an uneasy racial coexistence and confounding pious hopes for a smooth transition to the integration envisioned by so many of Baker and Fox's generation. Some white-ethnic Roman Catholics and Jews, who had resisted

## THE SUDDEN LURCH TOWARD INTEGRATION DISRUPTED BLACK COPING STRATEGIES, SCRAMBLING THE COORDINATES OF AN UNEASY RACIAL COEXISTENCE



LINDA BROWN (*BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION*), 1995



ALEX HALEY'S TV-FRIENDLY  
FOUL DRAMA OF BLACK  
DISPOSSESSION BECAME THE NEXT  
"MYTH FOR A DAY," AN UPBEAT  
STORY FOR THE MASS MARKET

their own assimilation into Anglo-Saxon norms, now intensified the sub-cultural revivals of "unmeltable ethnics." Responding to these assertions and, at the same time, to the equally unsettling prospect of black dissolution into whiteness through integration, a retaliatory black parochialism surfaced in public life for the first time in decades, assailing blacks whom it deemed too accommodating and forcing even assimilationist whites to acknowledge their own hyphenated Americanism.

Appearing amid the confusion, *Roots* at first startled, then relieved, pessimists on both sides of the color line. By the grace of Haley's pilgrimage, it seemed, blacks could recover and share the true story of their dispossession. His mythopoetic triumph tugged at people's hearts, strengthening hopes for a decorous pluralism of peoples and a decent integration of persons. Americans of all colors were transfixed, even as charges emerged that Haley had taken too many folkloric and fictional liberties with material he'd claimed was historically true. (He settled out of court for \$650,000 with author Harold Courlander, passages of whose novel *The African* Haley had pretty much copied.) Yet while *Roots* was denounced as a scholarly "fraud" by the historian Oscar Handlin, it was defended as an irresistible historical novel and pedagogical tool by other historians, including David Brion Davis, who told the *New York Times*, "We all need certain myths about the past, and one must remember how much in the myths about the Pilgrims or the immigrants coming here has been reversed." Haley received a "special" Pulitzer Prize and a rare "Citation of Merit" from a National Book Awards panel. ABC produced a second miniseries, *Roots: The Next Generations*, based on his new book *Search*, which chronicled his family's later tribulations and triumphs, including Haley's own work on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. "Now, as before," wrote Frank Rich in *Time*, "*Roots* occupies a special place in the history of our mass culture: it has the singular power to reunite all Americans, black and white, with their separate and collective pasts."

Today *Roots* is seldom mentioned. The History Channel's twentieth-anniversary broadcast in February was little remarked by viewers or print commentators. The book is still in stores—Doubleday calls it "an important title on the Dell backlist"—but it's not much read in college or high school courses. Few books on American racial matters mention Haley (who died in 1992). "*Roots*?" laughs the black religion scholar C. Eric Lincoln. "It's disappeared! Alex Haley was my friend, and I can tell you, he was a journeyman freelance writer, not a political writer or historian. He was given a status he didn't expect."

*Roots*'s virtual disappearance can't be explained with the observation that it accomplished its mission by transforming the consciousness of a generation. Nor is it enough to say that *Roots* shortchanged women by portraying them as passive helpmates; Haley's misconstruals have been redressed by Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and others. What drained *Roots* of its power with blacks as well as whites was a disillusionment in at least three dimensions. First, Haley idealized an Africa and a blackness that had been so overwhelmed (indeed, defined) by European invasion that they flourished only as negations of whiteness. Second, so complete was this submergence that Haley himself idealized American blacks' white abductors, if only implicitly, by telling blacks' own story in Western terms. In doing so he met his third pitfall: he tried to skirt Western mythology's tragic sense of life by telling an upbeat story for the mass market. *Roots* became the next "myth for a day," turning immense historical pain into immense profit. That was what slavery had done, and it was what *Roots* was meant to counter. But Haley's TV-friendly, docudramatic tale of black dispossession subtly reinforced the moral neutrality of classical liberalism, where markets are stronger than myths and history is not so much falsified as tamed.

In Africa, Haley depicted a precolonial Eden that hadn't existed, created his account of Kunta Kinte's youth there more out of current anthro-



ology than history, paired all of this with the tale of his own communion with village elders in postcolonial Gambia, and inflated black Americans' expectations of sub-Saharan Africa, past and present. For American blacks, there was no there there: "Whatever Africans share," writes the Ghanaian intellectual Kwame Anthony Appiah, "we do not have a common traditional culture, common languages, a common religious or conceptual vocabulary. . . . [W]e do not even belong to a common race . . ." When Americans making visits inspired by Haley's epiphanies got past their African hosts, they found strangers as indifferent or hostile to them as "fellow whites" in my grandparents' native Lithuania might be to me were I to visit there now—strangers who may resemble me racially but

# AMERICAN AFROCENTRISTS SEEKING A ROMANTIC FOIL TO A RACIST AMERICA FOUND THE SAME "ETHNIC CLEANSING" UNDER WAY IN AFRICA



MILLION MAN MARCH, WASHINGTON, 1995

whose religion, myths, and current interests have little in common with those of my Jewish "tribe," which they drove out or exterminated in the 1940s. American Afrocentrists (and liberal whites) seeking a romantic, Pan-African foil to a racist America found the same "ethnic cleansing" furiously under way in Nigeria, Rwanda, Zaire, and the Sudan. The very designation "black" was no more useful a moral, political, or cultural identification than is "white" in Lithuania or the Balkans.

"Blackness" did have one use: as a foil to whiteness. It is hard to exaggerate—yet hard for some blacks to acknowledge—how overwhelming was the European presence in Africa. Even the work of such celebrated Pan-African writers as Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe presupposes what Appiah calls "the recognition that a specifically African identity began as the product of a European gaze." They write and are read almost exclusively in English and French. Some apparently indigenous African traditions were concocted in response to, and sometimes with the tactical support of, white colonizers, and in order to construct so-called national-





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BLACKS BROUGHT AS SLAVES TO  
AMERICA WERE SO UPROOTED  
FROM AFRICA THAT THEY WERE  
OBLIGED TO ACCEPT THE VALUES  
OF THEIR NEWFOUND LAND

liberation movements. Africans had to devise "national" identities with European military, economic, philosophical, and linguistic tools.

For Americans, especially, the tie to Africa proved, in the words of the black economist and social critic Glenn Loury, "an empty hope, all remnants and echoes." American black luminaries who pursued those echoes only to fall for African dictators' charms might do well to heed the black writer Albert Murray's comment last year on C-SPAN that the Jeffersonian idea that all are equal didn't come from Africa, where others were also enslaved. The blacks on the Underground Railroad "weren't trying to get back to the tribal life in Africa . . . they have no birthrights anywhere in the world except in America." Black Americans' only coherent memories and myths begin in the holds of the slave ships to which other Africans had consigned them—a point that haunted Maya Angelou on a visit to Ghana, as she wondered whether some of her hosts' ancestors had arranged to sell her own.

**B**y assigning two white men to kidnap Kunta Kinte, Haley wasn't just distorting African history (in which the majority of slaves were captured and sold to whites by blacks); he was juggling European archetypes, borrowing Western literary themes meant to appeal to whites as well as blacks. He formulated sub-Saharan Africa's diffuse cultural attitudes into a Western myth of "exile" or "pilgrimage" for a black American audience that had internalized such notions from the Old Testament and for other Americans who needed to understand, in both Christian and Enlightenment terms, what their own forebears had perpetrated or suborned. But the African slaves had no signs that an African god was punishing them for their sins with an exile like that of the Jews, or blessing their "errand into the wilderness" like that of the Puritans. *Roots* wasn't a product of its protagonists' own mother culture; it was the work of a thoroughly Western, Christian, American writer who took as much from Hebrews and Puritans as from Africans. The novel is a Western account of a monstrous Western crime—a crime only according to Western religious and political standards that triumphed later to abolish slavery, as no African authority had done and as the Sudan hasn't done yet.

The irony, of course, is that the Western Enlightenment principles that supported African colonial liberation failed to prevent colonialism in the first place. And the ghastly, bloody misadventures in Europe since 1914 remind us that Western "values" often only ratchet up the human struggle with evil into unprecedented levels of barbarity. Even the notion that skin color is destiny derives from the ignorant scientific and cultural prejudices that draped nineteenth-century European imperialist states in all their clanking, blundering glory.

If there is any glory for the West in all this, it lies not in Western power but in Western thought, which projects triumphs out of tragedies and which, for all its misuses, nourishes the capacity for rational self-contradiction that alone has put such words as "democracy," "liberation," and "human rights" into the minds and hearts of peoples on all five continents. The West's true Eden is not Haley's bucolic African village but the garden in which a serpent corrupted two human beings with the apple of knowledge. Haley's distortions—like those of countless Western writers before him—misrepresented the West as much as they did Africa. When people of any color imagine their origins as racially pure and their heroes as morally infallible, they shrink from the tragic Western truth rooted in the story of The Fall.

They also misunderstand that if the West has any hope of improving on its work, that hope is in America. *Roots* showed, yet could not quite proclaim, that blacks brought as slaves into the American national experiment were so thoroughly uprooted from African sources that they were obliged to accept—for lack of anything else—the transcending liberal and Christian promises of their newfound land. Blacks internalized those promises and re-



learned their implementation long before Vernon Baker joined the 92nd Infantry Division in Italy. Precisely because they had not chosen to join this society, could not dominate it, and could not leave it, they had the highest possible stakes in redeeming its oft-stated, oft-violated ideal.

In that sense, surely, blacks became, for better or worse, the most "American" of us all. In a nation born of fraught departures, clean breaks, and fresh starts on new frontiers, they had to construct their moral universe, again in the words of Glenn Loury, "almost out of nothing, almost heroically, in the cauldron of slavery. Or, as my friend Nathan Huggins puts it, 'We're not an alien population, we're the alienated population. We're after getting our birthright. We're the son who hasn't been acknowledged.' See, *that binds you*. You can't turn back from it. Part of what I want is an acknowledgment of my place, my legitimacy, my belonging." The special depth of this need is what makes blacks "America's metaphor," as Richard Wright called them—moral witnesses to a self-creating America, as well as the country's harshest, sometimes most nihilist, assailants.

No wonder whites at first felt relieved by the *Roots* story: it had an ending happy enough to make whites as well as blacks feel better about themselves. Although Haley didn't make much of the point in the book, white Americans had responded to black fortitude and resistance not only with cross burnings and guns but with the Abolitionist crusade, the great pedagogical project that sent W.E.B. Du Bois and hundreds of New England schoolteachers South during and after Reconstruction to "uplift" freed slaves. Despite all of their cruelties, condescensions, and overweening moral self-regard, white Americans participated in a civil-rights movement that combined black Baptist communalism with a race-transcendent, New England Calvinist theology of personal responsibility and justification by a faith beyond color.

So, if there was any real nobility in Haley's effort to weave blacks more vividly into the American tapestry—to make Kunta Kinte a mythic American like Paul Revere—it consisted of the tragic but potentially redemptive fact that the author had to use the abductors' language and metaphysical looms. If *Roots* hasn't helped a new generation of American blacks to fit itself into the national tapestry, we must find something else that can, for separating the black thread would harm all of us even more than hiding it deep in the weave, as we've done in the past. Even Louis Farrakhan knows this, no matter how strenuously he insists on the separatist claims of the Nation of Islam. Not for nothing did he hold his march on the Washington Mall, amid all those white monuments, rather than in the part of the Mississippi Delta that the enthusiasts of his predecessor, Elijah Muhammad, once designated as the provisional seat of the Republic of New Africa. Had Farrakhan gone there, many fewer black men would have followed.

Yet *Roots* failed to forestall the ascendancy of Farrakhan not only because Haley dissembled about Africa and juggled tragic Western myths to tell a black story but also because those myths are losing their traction against the forces of a global market that employs the techniques of mass marketing to guarantee the liquidity of collective amnesia. The relentless logic of the market overwhelms not only the worst racist pretensions, white as well as black, but also the best American civic cultural traditions. Commitments to reason, individual rights, and freedom of contract aren't "Eurocentric" ruses meant to co-opt and subordinate nonwhites; they embody historic human gains, and it would be folly to abandon them for fantasies of racial destiny.

When Vernon Baker said, "I knew things would get better," surely he did not think they would get "blacker" in the sense that blacks would become so protective of blackness that whites' enthusiasm at the prospect of Colin Powell's running for president would engender marked black am-

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bivalence about it. Nor, surely, did Baker's "better" characterize extenuated rationalizations of Ebomics, gangsta rap celebrations of black self-immolation, or widespread black support for O. J. Simpson's acquittal and the "black" jurisprudence and epistemology invoked to excuse it.

Similarly, when Arlene Fox said, "When a man does his duty, his color isn't important," she was not applauding some recent efforts to redefine "duty" in ways that make one's skin color one's destiny all over again. Three years ago, while defending race-norming in college admissions and a dizzying array of campus "diversity" programs that transform everyone with a dark skin into a walking placard for disadvantage, Rutgers University president Francis Lawrence slid, infamously, into lingo about blacks' "genetic hereditary background." It was an all too emblematically liberal Freudian slip, born of believing that the best way to overcome racism's legacies is to create separate, remedial tracks for blacks while denying that one is doing anything of the sort by enshrining and embellishing disparities as cultural "differences."

On the other hand: Colin Powell could yet become president, and Oprah Winfrey could own a movie studio; black candidates keep winning in white-majority districts, and more blacks and nonblacks are marrying, which explains why many of the novels in black bookstores are about multiracial relationships. Many blacks, in fact, have anticipated and met a challenge now facing everyone else in the country; we are all being "abducted" from our ancient ethnic moorings by powerful currents we no longer control or fully comprehend. Thanks significantly to blacks, who started from "nothingness" here, other Americans have a better start on what now has become a more general problem. Eu-

ropeans sometimes say that white Americans walk and talk "black." The observation fits neatly with the feeling among some Africans that black Americans are not "black" at all. America needs blacks not because it needs blackness but because it needs what they've learned on their long way out of blackness—what others of us have yet to learn on the journeys we need to take out of whiteness.

For all its wrong turns and dead ends, the quest by black Americans for acknowledgment and belonging in our national life is the most powerful epic of unrequited love in the history of the world. "Afrocentrism," Gerald Early has written, "is a historiography of decline, like the mythic epic of the [lost, antebellum] South. The tragedy is that black people fail to see their 'Americanization' as one of the greatest human triumphs of the past 500 years." Even if every broken heart could be mended and every theft of opportunity be redressed, there would remain a black community of memory, loss, and endurance. Yet the country's special debt to blacks cannot be paid by anything less than an inclusion that brings the implosion of the identity of blackness—and, with it, of whiteness. The most that blacks can expect of the rest of us (and the most that Vernon Baker and Arlene Fox have expected) is that we will embrace and judge blacks—and let ourselves in turn be embraced and judged by them—as individual fellow participants in our common national experiment. As brothers, some used to say.



FAITH AND CENTER, BY VAN, JR.



# OUR MACHINES, OURSELVES

**T**his month, in a conference room in midtown Manhattan, some measure of our humanity will be put to trial when Garry Kasparov, the world chess champion, sits down for a rematch with Deep Blue, IBM's chess-playing computer, which he narrowly defeated in a match last year. If the game indeed presents a test of our humanity, it is one that is part of a long and anxious tradition. From John Henry's fatal victory over a steam-powered mining machine to the square-root showdowns between precocious mathematicians and first-generation calculators, the only instinct that has proved more consistently human than our drive to invent tools has been our need to demonstrate our superiority over them.

What, then, is at stake in the match? If Kasparov loses, are we all somehow diminished? Will humanity have been defeated by its own machines or, having had the wit to program a triumphant computer, will we once again declare the supremacy of our inventive genius and so give to the loss the name of victory?

In the hope of analyzing the anxiety that attends this contest, *Harper's Magazine* invited four humans to lunch—that very human invention—to discuss our machines, ourselves, and the post-Deep Blue future.



*The following forum is based on a discussion held at Saturday, a restaurant in New York City.  
Jack Hitt serves as moderator.*

THE EDIT

is the contributing editor of Harper's Magazine.

JAMES BAILEY

is the author of *After Thought: The Computer Challenge to Human Intelligence*.

He is currently manager at Thinking Machines Corporation.

DAVID GELERNTER

is a professor of computer science at Yale University and an adjunct fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

He is the author of *The Muse in the Machine: Computerizing the Poetry*

of Human Thought and 1989's *The Lost World of the Fair*.

*Drawing Life, his memoir of surviving an attack by the Unabomber, will be published this summer.*

JAMES HITT

is a computer scientist, composer, visual artist, and author. He coined the term "virtual reality"

and founded the world's first virtual-reality company. He is currently a visiting artist at the

New York University Interactive Telecommunication Program.

CHARLES SIEBERT

is a poet and journalist whose essays have appeared in Harper's Magazine.

His book *Wickerby: An Urban Pastoral* will be published next winter.

## I

### ASSAULTS ON OUR SPECIALNESS

JACK HITT: In February 1996, in Philadelphia, the world chess champion, Garry Kasparov, played a six-game chess match against a computer named Deep Blue. Although Deep Blue won the first game, beating Kasparov in thirty-seven moves, Kasparov came back to win the match 4-2. The competition seemed to catch the public's imagination in unusual ways, to stir hopes and fears that were sometimes hard for us to articulate. Why do you think we were so obsessed with this match?

JAMES BAILEY: We've been taught for centuries that rational thought is the height of human achievement and that chess is the ultimate expression of rational thought. People playing chess are supposedly people at their mental best. So it makes sense that we'd be intrigued by the prospect of a machine beating a human at such a supposedly lofty pursuit.

DAVID GELERNTER: And chess itself is intrinsically fascinating. I'm not a good chess player, but I can't help noticing that it holds a certain allure. There are many writers and artists who have fallen under its sway, people like Marcel Duchamp and Vladimir Nabokov, who spent huge periods of their lives completely obsessed with the game.

HITT: Much of the reaction to the match in the press, and from people I spoke to, was one of anxiety. The fact that Deep Blue defeated Kasparov in the first game of the match and the prospect that a new and improved version of

Deep Blue might win the rematch that's scheduled for this May—those are developments that many people have found personally threatening. Why is that?

CHARLES SIEBERT: There is a perception that our specialness—our humanness—has been taking it on the chin a lot lately. It seems that every day in the daily paper there's another assault on the essence of what a human being is. We find out chimps are 98 percent the same DNA as we are. A sheep is cloned, and people begin to think that this is all we are, an assemblage of biological juices—line them up the right way, and we can be reproduced. And so there's a tendency with this chess match to say, "Oh no, not this too!" It's part of our larger sense of an assault on our specialness.

JARON LANIER: People have an enormous amount of anxiety about what a person is. The better computers get at performing tasks that people find hard to do, the more that definition is threatened. It's the same question that drives all the fire around the abortion debate—the question of which things in the universe we consider to be enough like us to deserve our empathy, to deserve our moral support. I think ultimately it has to do with whether we define people in a sacred way or in a functional way.

SIEBERT: The hysteria over cloning is related to this very confusion. Is this all we are? Are we this reducible and finite? In fact, we are not, but people are having a tough time accommodating these incursions on our spirituality.

BAILEY: Of course the chess match isn't really an incursion on our spirituality at all. We as a



species made a decision at some point to define human uniqueness around our intelligence, our ability to do mind tasks, but I would argue that that decision was a mistake. That purported strut of uniqueness is about to get kicked out from under us, by Deep Blue, among other things, and that's certainly going to force us to come to some different understandings of what is uniquely human. It's going to be a painful process, but if in that process we come to understand that we're not essentially analytical beings, that our essence is something higher, then that's a positive development.

SIEBERT: I felt a kind of claustrophobia when I read about this chess match. I didn't feel threatened by Deep Blue's ability; I felt bothered by the idea that chess is a good measure of us. Chess is such a narrow prism through which to view our humanness that there's something almost offensive about it. It's just a game that we made up.

LANIER: And since computers are getting faster and faster, it's only a matter of time before a computer becomes world chess champion. Chess just happens to be a mental activity that people find very difficult. That's why we find it fascinating.

SIEBERT: There is something touching, though, in our reaction to this contest. To some extent, it is our way of embodying the otherness of the machine. In other words, this is an attempt on our part to anthropomorphize the computer. The chess match becomes *mano a mano*, even though it's really *mano a máquina*. We're assigning the computer almost human properties to help us embrace its otherness. And it's a difficult embrace.

BAILEY: One of the frustrations for me is that I don't think this is a story about *mano a silicio*. It's about a bunch of guys at IBM who by themselves had no chance of ever getting into an international chess tournament, and therefore chose to collaborate with a computer. The computer by itself also didn't have a chance of making it into an international chess game. But together they were able to go where neither of them could go alone. Now, the press is always going to see the story as Kasparov versus Deep Blue, but in reality it is Deep Blue *with* a team of us—a team of humans.

GELERNTER: It's true that the story does engender a certain amount of fear and hysteria, but there's a positive aspect to it too. There are a lot of people who get a kick out of seeing how smart we are. To be able to program a computer that is capable of doing what this computer does requires exceptionally clever guys.

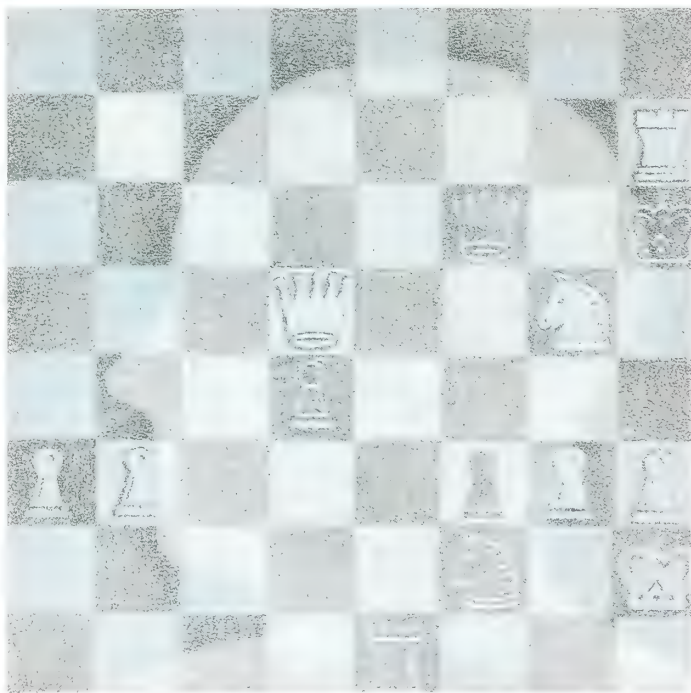
BAILEY: I think it would be exciting if, in

fact, the computer developed whole new ways of playing the game of chess. The machine would be interesting if it not only won but found new ways of winning. What makes chess so uninteresting is that it is dead. The chess pieces don't change their behavior, they don't adapt, they don't do anything differently because of where they are on the board. There are sixty-four squares and two players. Chess is a very small data problem. It's not something we need help with. It's not, to my mind, an unsolved problem in the world. People aren't dying for the lack of good chess play. And so while it's eye-catching, it's not important. I think that the real fun is going to come when these machines are put seriously to work at things we're bad at.

HITT: What's an example, James? What kinds of things are we bad at?

BAILEY: Well, we're starting to get a lot of very useful information about the planet we live on and its creatures and their behavior—information that comes from places like satellites, some of it in trivial form coming from checkout scanners and things like that. And we're helpless to deal with it. Increasingly, we don't have the ability to make sense of the trillions of pieces of information we receive each day—economic data, ecological data, even weather data. Computers are very good at examining these huge databases and noticing patterns that we are oblivious to.

GELERNTER: There's another aspect to this chess match that we have to be aware of, and that is





public relations. It would be good for people at large to know more about technology than they do, and the question is, How can you con-



vey to them what the current state of the art is? If a computer produces a proof of the four-color theorem, let's say, that runs on for 300 million pages, and not even 2 percent of the world's mathematicians understand it, so what? But if it beats a chess grand master—that's something people can grasp. It seems to me we do well as a society when we let research flow. Research is good for us. And the sort of thing that gets people's attention is a contest. When the Soviets put the first satellite in orbit in the late Fifties, that was wonderful, because we wanted to beat them. Money flowed into science. Science is starving now. The public doesn't owe us a living. The question is, Can we do something that makes them interested in what we're doing? This is the sort of thing that gets people's attention.

## II.

### STUCK IN THE STATIC PRESENT

HITT: How do the anxieties that people feel about this chess competition compare with the feelings or anxieties that people have felt at other moments in history about the machines they live with? Is this a new anxiety or just a new form of an old anxiety?

SIEBERT: I think it's a new form of an old anxiety, perhaps best summed up by this story I read re-

cently about people who are defecting from modern life to go live with the Amish because—is this the age-old complaint?—the world is going too fast these days. One of them said that first we had the horse and buggy and then it was the automobile and now the world is going at an electronic speed. He said, "We're finding that people can't live at that speed. We're being crushed by the way we live." And I thought, What does that mean? The world is going at the same speed it ever did. Human beings walk at the same speed they ever did. What people really mean when they say this is that our *things* are going a little faster than they used to, and the sadness is that we can't accompany them. I think it's a feeling of disappointment; we are left behind in the static present, a present that feels more static than it ever did because these computers go that much faster. In a way, it's the same complaint as the Victorians had about tool-and-die machines displacing a physical function, but computers seem more frightening to people because they perform an unseen work. Since the Industrial Revolution there's been a feeling of physical disappointment, one that has become inherent in the modern psyche. Now with the computer there comes a mental disappointment.

LANIER: But it's a disappointment that doesn't reflect reality. For people even to imagine that the human mind is slower than a computer reflects a profound misunderstanding of what minds are able to do. It's a misunderstanding that goes way back, and in order to understand it, you have to understand a bit about the history of artificial intelligence. The field of artificial intelligence has its roots in a paper written in 1950 by Alan Turing. He was a famous code breaker during World War II who worked with some of the earliest electronic computers. Turing figured that eventually we would reach a point where computers would become intelligent, and he reasoned that we would need a test to help us decide when that point is reached. What he ended up with was something called the Turing Test, in which a tester communicates with both a computer and a human via a screen and a keyboard. If the tester can't distinguish between them, Turing says, then the computer is intelligent. Deep Blue is just the latest step in the project that Turing started. Now, Turing's interpretation of his own thought experiment was that if you can't tell the computer from the person, it must mean that the computer has become more human-like. But, of course, there is another interpretation, which is that the person has become more computer-like.

GELERTNER: That's absolutely right. Turing set us



off on an extremely superficial, behaviorist view of intelligence. He was willing to attribute intelligence—the capacity to think and understand and have mental states—to an electronic box, as long as the box behaved in a certain way.

BAILEY: I'm not so concerned with being able to replicate the wonders of human intelligence. What I would be very intrigued to see are forms of intelligence that are distinctly nonhuman, that solve the same problems human intelligence solves but in a way we humans never thought of. If Deep Blue totally revolutionizes the game of chess, if it comes up with whole new openings and approaches that render the existing methods obsolete, then that's exciting.

LANIER: In the computer-science community, there's a perspective, which is difficult to communicate to the outside world, that things are going to continue to change in our field at such a rapid rate that at some point something very dramatic will change about the fundamental situation of people in the universe. I don't know if I share that belief, but it's a widespread belief. In the mythology of computer science, the limits for the speed and capacity of computers are so distant that they effectively don't exist. And it is believed that as we hurtle toward more and more powerful computers, eventually there'll be some sort of very dramatic Omega Point at which everything changes—not just in terms of our technology but in terms of our basic nature. This is something you run across again and again in the fantasy writings of computer scientists: this notion that we're about to zoom into a transformative moment of progress that we cannot even comprehend.

SIEBERT: Filippo Marinetti, the Italian futurist, said in the Twenties that in about a hundred years the Danube would be flowing in a straight line at two hundred miles an hour, this being the effect of speed on the physical world. It's a confusion born of this disjunction between our plodding sameness and the speed of the machines we make. There's a great line at the beginning of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. The priest looks out across at the cathedral and right behind him is a printing press, and he says that cathedrals are the handwriting of the past, but with the printing press everything will change. The proliferation of the written word shifted the burden of telling stories away from sculpture and cathedrals. So yes, inventions do shape the imperative behind various forms in the realm of art. But the impulse to make that art is the same. For example, a lot of people say that poetry's dead. Well, no. Poetry's quite alive, but the imperative behind what you say in poetry and how you say it has changed,

because now you have printers and word processors and high-speed copiers, and you don't need rhyme as much as you once did. Rhyme originally existed so that you could lock a thought on the air and keep it.

GELERNTER: What you say about rhyme is relevant in the sense that rhyme is unquestionably a good memorization device and so it has heuristic value, particularly if you can't write. Nowadays, however, if you write a poem and it rhymes—and by “nowadays” I mean for the last several centuries—you're doing it for its own sake, because of the music of it. By the same token, when computers carry out various analytic tasks that we thought were uniquely human but we now see are not, we are able to refine our idea of what humanity really is. Humans will play chess even when no human has a hope of being the best chess player in the world, just as we continue to rhyme even though rhyming no longer serves any practical purpose. We do it for the fun of it, because we enjoy it.

LANIER: The reason I never became a chess fanatic is that I realized the game had a formal framework that would make it difficult to turn it into a purely aesthetic experience. Since it's a game with a formal sense of what winning is, it has limited options for creative extrapolation. There's no such thing as freestyle chess, in which making elegant moves is valued more highly than capturing your opponent's king—though that could be a serendipitous result of

## FOR PEOPLE TO IMAGINE THAT THE HUMAN MIND IS SLOWER THAN A COMPUTER REFLECTS A DEEP MISUNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MINDS DO

Deep Blue's success. In the old days, there was an idea that when you got good at chess, you knew you were at the outer reaches of a certain type of thought. There was an Olympian quality to it. After Deep Blue, you can no longer quite feel that way. Chess after Deep Blue becomes something like fencing—an aesthetic activity that can be enjoyed in a nostalgic way and as something that is good for the spirit, but one that no longer feels like exploring the outer edge of human ability. Chess becomes like karate after the nuclear bomb.

HITT: Does everything eventually lose its usefulness and become aesthetic?

LANIER: That's a wonderful thing. That should be considered a goal of life.

SIEBERT: I agree. This reminds me of the Industrial Revolution, when Carlyle and Schiller and the Romantics were all voicing their com-



plants about how these machines reduce us and how man will lose his soul standing before this repeated mechanization. Carlyle would invoke Greek culture all the time as his paradigm of a culture that had this moral imperative, in which art reached its peak. And the great response to Carlyle came from a Cincinnati-based lawyer, Timothy Walker. He said: That's preposterous. The reason why the Greeks reached the heights they did is because they dispatched all their physical work to slaves and they had time to sit around and think and achieve this higher aspect of themselves. And his argument was, the more we unshoulder these burdens to our machinery, the more we become our essence.

LANIER: But we're doing the reverse of what the Greeks did. It's as if they had compelled their slaves to enjoy their philosophical whimsies and have their fun. We're assigning our philosophical thinking to the computers. When we talk about using artificial intelligences to choose what book we might want to read, then what we're doing is placing the burden of ourselves as philosophers onto these so-called intelligent agents.

HITT: We already do that. They're called magazine editors. You subscribe to a magazine because you like the intelligent agent who is editing the magazine and making choices for you.

GELERTNER: The term "intelligent agent" can legitimately be applied to an editor, but there is no machine or computer program to which the term can legitimately be applied. I mean, there's an important distinction between following *somebody's* advice and following *something's* advice. Following a thing's advice is a lot lazier than following a person's advice.

BAILEY: I don't understand. Isn't there only the difference between following good advice and following bad advice?

LANIER: This gets us into very mysterious territory: trying to understand how communication can be possible in the first place. If you believe that a conversation between two people consists of objectifiable bits of information that are transmitted from one to the other and decoded by algorithms, then certainly what you said, James, is correct, and there's no difference. If you believe that meaning is something more mysterious than that, something that no one has yet been able to

find a method of reducing, then you would not agree with your statement. I'm in the latter category. I think that the fundamental process of conversation is one of the great miracles of nature, that two people communicating with each other is an extraordinary phenomenon that has so far defied all attempts to capture it. There have been attempts made in many different disciplines—in cognitive science, in linguistics, in social theory—and no one has really made much progress. Communicating with another person remains an essentially mystical act.

### III.

#### SEVENTY-SEVEN NOSES UNDER THE TENT

HITT: When I think about the prospect of Deep Blue actually defeating Kasparov, for some reason I feel like we as a species would lose something. Somehow I feel like it would be a sad thing for us. Am I wrong?

LANIER: It is not a coincidence that at the same time science is improving its ability to simulate some tasks that we used to think of as being in the domain of the brain—like chess—we are also seeing a rise in religious fundamentalism around the world, a quest for an anchor of meaning and an anchor of identity. I think that those two events are linked. There is a fear of losing one's own grounding, one's own identity, as technologies become able to either simulate or perhaps take on human identity. Because if technology's capable of making you, of making a person or making a mind, then technology's also





capable of making variants of you and betters of you. It becomes profoundly threatening.

GELERNTER: Anybody who looks at modern society and compares us to, let's say, America in the Forties realizes that our technology is vastly more powerful, that we live a lot longer, we're a lot healthier, we're vastly richer, that our laws are better, that we've done all sorts of good things—but life has gotten worse. It's absolutely clear that the texture of society has tended to unravel in recent decades. It's not technology that's caused the unraveling, but people are worried that the unravelers keep winning.

HITT: Isn't that the fear that I'm talking about?

GELERNTER: Absolutely. People are afraid when they see software do incredibly powerful new things, because they say that this world that software built stinks. It's great in all sorts of material ways, but it's a spiritual and moral wasteland. It may not be a cultural wasteland, but certainly it's culturally inferior to what this country was fifty years ago.

BAILEY: If we are, in fact, going through a cultural transition of many-century scale, if, in fact, we are leaving a machine age and an industrial age and moving into an information age, then there's a lot of unraveling to be done. There are going to be a lot of raw nerves. But I think it's a positive development that a lot of old assumptions tied to the industrial age are loosening. Life is no longer as hierarchical as it has been for thousands of years. It's more democratic. It's more parallel. That's progress.

GELERNTER: But people are aware of the fact that they're losing something. It's not the fault of technologists that they're losing it, but they certainly associate it with technology.

HITT: How are those two things connected, our advances in technology and our increasing disappointment?

GELERNTER: Technologists do their job when they build the best machines they can and make them available to us. That's what they're supposed to do and that's what they in fact do. They don't make choices for us about how we should use the machines they've built. Ruskin made famous statements in the nineteenth century about the railroad. He said, Everybody's streaking here and there on the railroad, but there was always more in the world than men could see, walk they ever so fast. And what the hell are they going to gain by going faster? Now, the existence of the railroad doesn't mean that Ruskin can't take a walk in his backyard; he can. The technologists have accomplished something useful—they've made people richer, they've made people happier in a lot of ways—but people don't feel the spiritual strength to turn down technology in the cases where it di-

minishes rather than makes better the texture of their lives. Technology is a constant temptation to them. People don't like to live being constantly tempted. They don't like to be given these tough choices all the time. And technology never lets up. It's one tough choice after another.

SIEBERT: So would you rather live in a world without technology?

GELERNTER: Absolutely not. I'm not against technology. I'm explaining why I think it upsets people, makes them melancholy, depresses them. If I had a vote I'd vote for this world over a nontechnology world, but I can understand why it's an upsetting world to live in.

BAILEY: I think the reason that Deep Blue's success is so troubling to us is the fact that we're all carrying around a backlog of evidence that a new

## PEOPLE SEE SOFTWARE DO INCREDIBLE NEW THINGS, BUT THEY KNOW THAT THIS WORLD THAT SOFTWARE BUILT STINKS

information world is aborning and an old industrial world is dying, and it's evidence that we're having trouble coming to terms with. Eventually a camel's nose is going to get under the tent that causes us not just to recognize that *that* nose is there but to go back and relook at the other seventy-seven noses that are also poking into the tent. Deep Blue really has the potential to break this conceptual logjam, to force each of us to acknowledge not just that chess has changed but that many other things have changed as well.

### IV.

#### A NEW WUTHERING HEIGHTS EVERY WEEK

HITT: I think what's truly, profoundly disturbing about the Deep Blue contest is that for most of this last aeon, we have thought that where our individuality, where our humanness resided was precisely where Deep Blue is now moving in.

BAILEY: One of the things that make people unique is the profound desire to *believe* that we're unique. We're always hanging our sense of our uniqueness on something, and over the past couple of centuries a lot of people have hung it on rational thought. Bad place to hang it, but that's where they hung it.

GELERNTER: But is it clear that rational thought is reducible to chess playing? I think that most people, if they thought about it carefully, would not believe that what's going on in the computer is anything like what goes on in their head, whether it wins the chess match or not.



... When a great epiphany in a human head is not, in the end, entirely knowable; we make stabs at expressing it, in art and novels and poems, but it's not replicable. I'll use Nabokov's account of his

## COMPUTERS ARE BEGINNING TO DO THINGS THAT WE HUMANS WISH WE COULD DO BUT CAN'T, AND THAT IS BOTH VALUABLE AND INTRIGUING

own work. He talks about what an epiphany is: He's walking down the street, the sun hits a leaf on a tree above him in a certain way at the same time that he remembers his mother, and then a carriage goes by—it's a compacted moment, the meaning of which is not readily apparent to the person who had the moment. He describes the art process as a dismantling and reassembling of the moment with such suppleness and simultaneity that the reader gets some approximation of the very experience that moved the artist. If one day a computer could do that kind of decoding of the simultaneity of inspiration and perception, then I would feel melancholy.

GELERNTER: But even if it could do that, you still wouldn't necessarily want to attribute thought to it, would you? You wouldn't think that it had any beliefs or any desires or any feelings or any of the content that your own internal mental landscape does. I mean, would any kind of behavior that a machine showed convince you that it had mental states in the sense that you do?

SIEBERT: No, because all you could do to get a computer to do that is give it the information with which to spit it back. And then you would have a simulacrum of the thing, and it's a pale, lifeless, bloodless imitation.

GELERNTER: Right, even if it were a *great* imitation. If you were to get a computer to write beautiful novels and everybody loved them, that might be good. We don't have that much of a novelist shortage, but let's say we did—that still wouldn't necessarily convince you that what the computer was doing was comparable to what a human being does.

BAILEY: But if they're beautiful novels, who cares?

GELERNTER: It's strictly an emotional issue. It has no pragmatic significance. If the computer can write a better novel than I can, fine, read the computer's novel. It's an emotional issue of where does humanness lie, and do we think this object is like us or do we just think it's a tremendously valuable machine.

HITT: Would the fact that a computer was writing beautiful novels affect you?

GELERNTER: Absolutely. I'm sure it would change my feeling about the culture. It wouldn't change my feeling about the essence of human-

ness or the capabilities of software. But on a pragmatic level, we build machines to do things that are useful. And writing novels is one useful thing. People get pleasure and satisfaction from reading novels. Most novels are no good, so if the average quality of novels got better and I knew that I could go into any newspaper store and pick up a novel that was as good as my favorite novel, that was the artistic equivalent of *Wuthering Heights*, let's say, then that's great, because then instead of just one *Wuthering Heights* I can get a new *Wuthering Heights* every week.

LANIER: Wait, wait, wait. Are you speaking sarcastically or seriously when you say that?

GELERNTER: It's a thought experiment. I don't think it's a likely outcome.

LANIER: To me your statement is like a *reductio ad absurdum* of positivism, of this idea that humanity is reducible. If there were in fact a different *Wuthering Heights* every week, *Wuthering Heights* would lose meaning.

GELERNTER: I'm not willing to rule out on logical grounds that software could be made to write novels that I would enjoy as much or that would move me or interest me or grip me as much as *Wuthering Heights*. I think it's extremely unlikely, I would bet against it, but I don't rule it out logically. Even if it were to be accomplished, though, I wouldn't wind up attributing thought to the computer that did it and it wouldn't wind up changing my estimation of what humanity and humanness are.

SIEBERT: I would think of it as a kind of game. It wouldn't threaten my humanity. I would think, Why do we need it?

GELERNTER: Even if a novel were, in some objective sense, plotted so well, written so tightly, that there was nothing objective to distinguish between it and *Wuthering Heights*, I could also say that ultimately I read a novel for human communication. I want to hear from another human being. And no matter how brilliant the language is, no matter what kind of proof you can give me that it's a great novel, if I know that it's not a human being who's communicating with me I shrug it off.

HITT: Would it be a fulfilling moment or not, going into that store and buying this brand-new *Wuthering Heights*? If a computer gives you a great novel every week, a novel that you really want to read, wouldn't that make you happy?

GELERNTER: It wouldn't give you a great novel.

HITT: Well, what if it could?

GELERNTER: I don't really think it is conceivable except technically. It could be achieved in a technical way but not in a way that has any meaning in human terms.

LANIER: The moment you start believing that automatically generated media has as much meaning



as human-generated media is the moment that you enter a Zen monastery for a couple of years to get in touch with your humanity again. This gets us back to the Turing Test's fatal flaw: if you accept computer-written novels, has the computer been elevated or has your humanity been reduced?

HITT: What is the distinction between writing novels and playing chess? Why do we believe that Deep Blue is going to beat Kasparov sometime in the next year or five years but don't believe that any computer is ever going to be able to write convincing novels?

LANIER: I don't think anybody said that. It might very well write convincing novels. But we'll never be able to say that for certain, so the question is not a productive one. You can say for sure that a computer has won a chess game, but you can't say for sure that a computer has written a good novel. Aesthetic judgments rely on the preferences of human beings, who can be supremely flexible and accommodating.

GELERNTER: This thing could beat Kasparov, and I could look at its winning game and say, This doesn't move me, I'm not able to consider this beautiful the way I consider Kasparov's game beautiful. I mean, chess doesn't speak to me, I don't consider it a form of communication, because I don't know it well enough, but I could imagine that if a grand master looked at a chess game as the manifestation of a particular style, of a particular personality, of a particular way of attack, then he would feel a certain emptiness when he looked at the brilliant winning games of Deep Blue. It really depends on how you evaluate the objects that you deal with. Some of them you evaluate simply as objects, and some of them you value because they're forms of human communication and people like to communicate with each other. If there's no person at the other end, ultimately the object is meaningless. With a synthetic novel, you could read the whole thing thinking that a human being wrote it and enjoy it, and when you found out that a human being didn't write it, you would feel betrayed and no longer able to think of it as a thing of beauty in any sense.

BAILEY: I don't think I would feel betrayed. I think I would feel intrigued. There is a separate ecology, if you will, of these machines that is different from ours. Computers talk to each other in ways that are different from the ways we talk to each other. We can ascribe meaning to our communications and no meaning to their communications—that's fine. But I think as their separate ecology grows into something quite formidable

and quite productive, particularly as it begins to do things that we wish we could do but can't, simply because we're wired differently, then that is both valuable and intriguing. Blotches of color that are placed on a canvas by a set of electronic circuits are different from blotches of color that are placed on a canvas by a human being, but they're both intriguing.

## V.

### A VERY LONELY ENTITY

HITT: From what I seem to hear, what you all would define as special about human beings is our ability to communicate. In other words, it



doesn't seem to trouble you that a computer might be able to replicate almost any human thought process, including writing a novel. You can say that playing chess is the highest human act, or that writing a novel is, or creating art, but if you agree that all of those acts could be simulated in some way so that we would be confused by the end product, then is the only source of human specialness the fact that we can communicate among ourselves?

LANIER: I would define human specialness as follows: What's special about people is that we're conscious, and we have faith in the possibility that we might be able to contact other consciousnesses.

HITT: What do you mean by conscious?

LANIER: That's an interesting question. Consciousness is the slipperiest subject imaginable. It's the



hardest thing to talk about. Consciousness is the experience of experience itself. It's not empirically verifiable. It's the only thing that can be shared that can't be shared objectively. One could have a device that looks at the neurons in my brain that are doing the activity of treasuring my consciousness and re-creates the activity of those neurons in a computer so that the computer could be said to be treasuring my consciousness, but consciousness still wouldn't be there. You can simulate every damn thing about the interior of the brain except for consciousness itself.

SIEBERT: Maybe we keep trying to assign human qualities to these machines because we feel so lonely. Consciousness is a very lonely entity. Why did our DNA tittle over into an ability to comment on our own DNA? I mean, let's just take the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve took of the forbidden fruit. Well, we *had* the forbidden fruit to begin with: it's self-knowledge. It's as if we have to keep making up stories about why the other DNA assemblages on this planet don't sit around and argue with themselves, don't have this isolating, lonely capacity to think in this way. Maybe what we're doing with computers is trying to give this loneliness to something else.

LANIER: So we'll be satisfied when we see some computers sitting miserably in a French café bemoaning their sorry fate.

SIEBERT: Exactly!

BAILEY: To me what makes us unique is our humanity. And if people choose to isolate that in something they call logical thought or consciousness, they can go ahead, but things like Deep Blue seem to be undercutting that idea. It's hard for me to understand how qualitatively the argument for tying humanity to consciousness is stronger than the old argument of tying humanity to rational thought, or the one before that of tying humanity to being at the center of the universe. So I'm stuck there: I know we're unique because of our humanity. I can't subdivide it.

HITT: There is a sense of despair, though, in watching technology gobble up what we do. People feel bewildered by the fact that machines not only can do so much of what humans can do but also can perform these almost magical tasks, repairing broken organs and so on. It does reduce us to a sense of medieval magic, a sense that we're inhabiting this world run by either somebody or something else. I think that's the source of a lot of people's anxiety about the encroaching ideal of the computer.

SIEBERT: Because my father was a tool-and-die man, I had a real personal involvement in this myth of our remaking. He was very enthusiastic about progress, and I used to think about the

pathos behind a man being enthusiastic about the machines that make the machines that will eventually make obsolete his own job. But he taught me early on that this is what we humans do. I remember the first time I went behind the TV set for something that had fallen there and looking at that little cityscape of tubes and smelling that warm acrid electricity that comes out. It was this numinous world, and it was quite incredible. It was a seminal moment for me in my childhood. But as I've looked back at that moment, I've realized that the inherent sadness in it was that my father spent his whole life selling two or three of the parts in that television set. I went to the tool-and-die convention last year in Chicago. I wanted to see the evolution of the myth of our remaking. Die machines used to look like mechanical men, but now all the armature's gone and it's just a box with a window lit from within. All you saw in booth after booth was a man in a smock pushing a button. The work happened inside, and through the window you could see it being washed down and cooled off, and the water spraying up. It was like a TV screen. And I went to another booth and it was just robot arc welders that looked like little gooseheads coming up, talking to each other briefly, coming back down. And at one point these three human arc welders came up—they had their union hats on—and they watched the part get dropped off in the bin, and they picked it up and they said, "Pretty damn good." And they walked off. What do these guys do? They've been displaced, and there's a kind of sadness in that, but, hey, this is evolution.

HITT: If people feel anxiety when they think about this chess match, is there another way for us to suggest that they think about it, another paradigm, another myth that is either a more positive or a more realistic one?

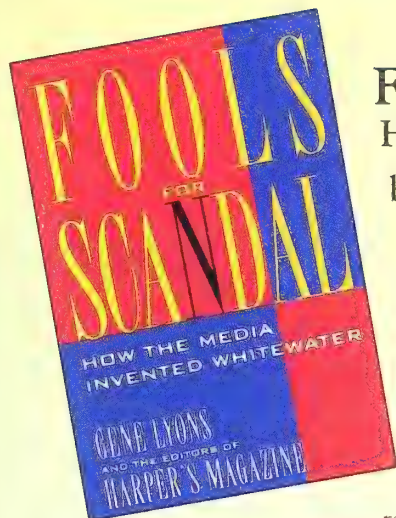
LANIER: A number of ideas have been presented in the conversation already. One of them is to say, Isn't it great how these clever people who themselves couldn't beat Kasparov could think of a way to write a program that could. Another way is to say, Isn't it magical how humanity persists even as we try to isolate what we thought made it up.

BAILEY: That's a very powerful statement: the more you think you chip away at our humanity, the more it's there. That's a very positive and very nourishing idea: Humanity is not at stake in this. Old ideas, old oversimplified ideas, are at stake, but that's good. Humans and computers are going to make a good team.

SIEBERT: We argue with our biology, and the result of that argument is civilization. That is what is unique about what we do. Sometimes the result is a Bach fugue, sometimes it's a glorious building. That's it, that's us, and it's amazing. ■



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# THE BOEING

A squadron of seventy lobbyists prep

Last December, the Seattle-based Boeing Company announced its intention to absorb the aircraft maker's biggest domestic competitor, McDonnell Douglas. Together, Boeing (currently ranked 40th in the Fortune 500) and McDonnell Douglas (ranked 74th) employ 190,000 workers and have operations in nearly every state. If, as expected, the merger is approved by the Federal Trade Commission, Boeing's annual sales will reach \$50 billion, making it roughly the 78th largest economy in the world. How will such a huge entity, the largest corporate consolidation ever, maneuver in Washington? The answer is to be found in this list of lobbyists Boeing already employs. Filed with both houses of Congress, this document reveals an army of 70 influence peddlers who seek to bend federal policy—including tax law, the budget, telecommunications, health care, land use, utilities, environmental policy, labor law, international trade, and foreign policy—to Boeing's agenda.

Nancy Bratton is one of Boeing's 40 in-house lobbyists, with specialties in "tax mitigation" and "tax avoidance." In this area, Bratton and her colleagues have compiled a record of remarkable success. Boeing not only avoided paying federal taxes in 1995 but received a \$33 million rebate, making its effective tax rate -9 percent. This feat was performed by judicious use of the Foreign Sales Corporate Tax Credit and hefty deductions for R&D. Post-merger, Bratton would be even busier, since McDonnell Douglas received a 1995 rebate of \$334 million—or about what Congress cut from senior and day-care centers last year.

Although Boeing deposits none of its profits into the federal treasury, lobbyists ensure that it receives plenty in subsidies and incentives. Taking advantage of a provision won by the defense industry in 1993, Boeing is expected to present the Pentagon—that is, taxpayers—with a \$1 billion bill for "restructuring costs" related to the merger, meaning plant closures, layoffs, and fat payouts to retiring executives. Aided by lobbyist Elizabeth Nash-Schwartz, Boeing also raids the till of the U.S.-funded Export-Import Bank, which offers below-market loans to countries purchasing U.S. goods. Having provided \$1 billion in 1994 alone, the bank has so generously greased the company's foreign sales that some in Congress refer to it as "The Bank of Boeing." Currently, the bank only subsidizes deals for products that are at least 85 percent domestic-made. But Boeing, which increasingly ships work overseas (the 737 tail sections once made by Kansans are now made by Chinese workers earning \$50 a month), is lobbying hard to relax that rule. By happy coincidence, Boeing and McDonnell Douglas are both members of the bank's Foreign Content Policy Review Group, making it probable that the bank will ultimately decide in Boeing's favor.

Friday, February 28, 1997

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Ken Silverstein is co-editor of CounterPunch, a Washington-based investigative newsletter. His last Annotation for Harper's Magazine, "K Street Schadenfreude," appeared in the March 1997 issue.



# FORMATION

al air superiority, by Ken Silverstein

Page 1

	Employees	Firm Location
IP		1100729
IP		2183595
IP	BALZANO, MICHAEL P. JR	0012573
IP	DESTEFANO, MIA	0012573
IP	GOODMAN, RUTHANNE	0012573
IP	VERMEULEN, JANEL	0012573
		1111921
		2191863
		4191885
		5153457
	ABBOUD, MEGGAN E	0012367
	ASHMORE, JAMES N.	D150432
	ASHMORE, JAMES N.	I012367
	BARAGAR, EMORY WILLIAM	0012367
	BARRY, LISA	A150432
	BENTLEY, SHELDON R	D150432
	BENTLEY, SHELDON R.	I012367
	BRATTON, NANCY	A150432
	CHEUNG, KIM	A150432

The union of McDonnell Douglas's \$8 billion and Boeing's \$2.5 billion in annual Pentagon deals would make Boeing the nation's No. 2 weapons contractor, giving its defense-industry lobby shop Balzano Associates added clout to protect boondoggles such as the F-22, which Boeing and Lockheed are developing for \$160 million per plane. The F-22 was initially promoted as an upgrade needed to battle Soviet fighters. Today Boeing's lobbyists invoke the menace of Canada with its squadron of McDonnell Douglas F-18s. McDonnell Douglas's defense deals include the \$348 million C-17 transport plane. The existing C-123 is adequate but hated by Pentagon brass because it lacks the gold plating central to the C-17's true mission: inflating the military's budget. A former Pentagon official calls the C-17 a "Golden Turkey" that "represents a sizable chunk of the GNP and yet can be blown to smithereens by a \$22 mortar shell." As if these cost-plus Pentagon deals weren't worrisome enough, merger critics fear that less competition could cause this featherbedding ethic to seep into Boeing's commercial-aircraft operations as well.

	BARRIE, ROBERT W	0160205
		1153638
		1124263
	ARBuckle, J. GORDON	0070465
	BOTTS, THOMAS HALE	0070465
	BROWN, MICHAEL	0070465
	DESCHAUER, JACK	0070465
	DRIVER, MICHAEL J.	0070465
	GIBBERG, ELENA M.	0070465
	HECHT, HERBERT W	0070465

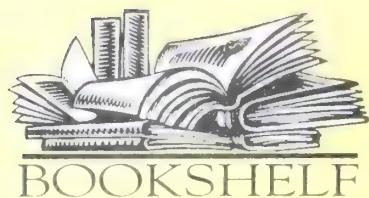
America's largest exporter, Boeing sells 60 percent of its merchandise abroad and thus hires a host of lobbyists to promote GATT and other free-trade initiatives. Specifically, Boeing courts Russia, a vast new market for commercial aircraft; Saudi Arabia, which has spent billions on Boeing's AWAC radar planes; and, most of all, China, where the company sells one of every ten planes it builds. Without China, notes Boeing executive Lawrence Clarkson, "we're toast," so Boeing retains Patton Boggs and six other Beltway lobby shops to promote bilateral commerce and gloss over China's wretched human-rights record. Boeing's Washington offices also created the China Normalization Initiative, academics who produce a steady stream of pro-China op-ed pieces and "instructional" materials.

	MOOSALLY, FREDERICK P	D191885
	NASH-SCHWARTZ, D. ELIZABETH	0012367
	NEWHART, MARTA	A150432
	RALSTON, ALAN C	0012367
	SEELY, PAUL	A150432
	SHORT, LINDA J.	0012367

	FIGG, FRANK L.	0012367
	HANSEN, CHRISTOPHER W	0012367
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	LARBELL, WILLIAM	A150432
		0012367

Chris Hansen, Boeing's point man on the merger, has attended several Clinton kaffeeklatsches, courting an administration both blind to China's blemishes and willing to push the FTC to allow companies to consolidate like the monopolies broken up at the turn of the century. Traditionally, the FTC deemed a company a monopoly if it controlled more than 60 percent of an industry. Post-merger Boeing would be the sole domestic manufacturer of commercial-jet aircraft and would possess two thirds of the international market. Yet the FTC appears warm to the position of Boeing's lobbyists that their merger is legal because the conglomerate would still face competition from Airbus, the European consortium that is the world's only other commercial-jet manufacturer. Using this logic, all U.S. automakers could merge because "Big One" would still face foreign competition. Too bad Detroit's lobbyists can't figure out a way to hide price hikes in airline tickets and Pentagon procurements.





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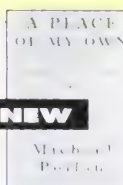
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# PENANCE

By Matthew Crain

**W**hen I hauled the crew back to my shop, there was a little foreign car parked by the front door. It was hot and raining, and as I backed the truck and trailer of mowers and equipment inside, a young woman I didn't know got out and opened the passenger door and tried to coax a young man out of the car. Finally he got out, and as he followed her I saw he wasn't a hunchback but he walked real slow and bent over, swinging his arms out in front of him and bobbing his head back and forth like a chicken. I remembered I had seen him before, pushing an empty grocery basket up the street.

They ducked through the rain pouring across the door in a waterfall.

"Are you Mr. Caleb Andrews?" she said.

I shook her hand. She was tiny and wore sandals and what I call granny glasses. She said her name was Mary Sterne and that she worked for the Washington County Mental Health Association. They were all the talk for turning the old George



McKinney house into a home for their patients. She pulled the boy around from behind her and said his name was Dennis Hatchett. I knew by looking at him that he wasn't all there. The boys were knocking around the shop with rakes and gas cans, but he didn't notice them; he kept his head down while she talked. His pants were too short and his shirt

was buttoned wrong. She had to nudge him before he'd shake my hand, and when he did he looked up through the black hair stringing down in his face, grunted a high grunt, then looked again at his feet. Lonnie came up and said they had cleaned the mowers and asked me now what should they do, but really he wanted to see the woman's wet blouse. I told him to load up the truck with mulch and the wheelbarrow and get ready to set out some shrubs around the First Federal Bank, but he just stood there. The woman said she had seen my ad in the paper and wanted to know if I still needed a landscaper. I was one man short, and the crew didn't like it because they were on summer vacation from high school and wanted to quit

work by five in the afternoon, then clean up and go out. I didn't like it because I hate to feel so behind and like I'm always trying to catch up. The year before, I had hired a man with one arm, so I asked her, "Can he push a lawn mower?"

She said, "Why don't you ask him?"

I asked him, and he nodded his

*Matthew Crain is the author of Mothers and Fathers Cut to Pieces, a collection of stories.*



head up and down. It was all I could do not to say, *Say Yes son. No, no, and show me respect.*

I caught Lonnie grinning and whispered in his ear, "I don't pay you to play with your dick."

He walked off in a huff, and I told the woman that the pay was four dollars an hour and each man brought his dinner. I said to him, "Can you be here by six tomorrow morning?"

He kept his head down, and his eyes flittered back and forth. I wanted to take him by the jaw and say, *Look at you, elder when he talks to you.*

She nudged him, then said to me, "He'll be here."

I was glad she left. She didn't wear a brassiere, and I can't be responsible for what one of the crew might say.

The next morning when I rolled into the shop at a quarter of six, Dennis was waiting by the door.

**T**hat first week Dennis nearly drove me crazy. He didn't know how to mow at all. He wouldn't turn a corner but would come back the way he came, throwing the clippings right back into the grass. He couldn't guide the wheel correctly and not leave skips and streaks. He wasn't strong enough to push the mower. If he got on a sideways bank, he'd push it off to the bottom, and then I'd have to drag it out and start it up again. Dennis wore slick-soled dress shoes, and when it was wet he slid all over the place and made the goddamnedest mess that ever was. If he had slipped backward, he would have pulled that mower over on top of him. I can't afford insurance on these boys, so I told Dennis always to walk over his land and pick up any big limbs or trash. I bought him a pair of safety glasses, but he wouldn't wear them because Lonnie called him "bubble eyes." He didn't have any patience. Anything that didn't work right, he'd kick it. If the mower choked or ran out of gas, he'd walk off and leave it and sit down in the truck and put his head on the dash and hold his breath. Then when everybody else was through, I'd have to send one of them out to finish his

work. The boys didn't like that, and I didn't blame them.

The third day Dennis worked for me we mowed the Lone Oak Cemetery, then right before dinner we drove to Four Corners and started on the lot behind Bunk Devine's grocery. Four Corners is a traffic light hanging over where Old Dixie Highway and Route 88 intersect at Whitey England's Chevron station. Bunk's is on the northwest corner, with a trashy culvert alongside and a rented-out trailer at the back. The trailer's sewer was always backing up and overflowing into that ditch, and it grew up in thick grass and mosquitoes. I hated going there. A slouchy blonde-headed woman with three boys lived there, and none of them had the same daddy. She'd stand in the door in her nightgown while we worked, and I told Bunk she had no business looking like that before a gang of men. But Bunk couldn't see past the little rent he got out of her.

Lonnie, Buford, and Tom sprayed themselves with Off, then put the can back in the truck behind the seat so Dennis wouldn't get any. Diesel fuel works better, so I wet a rag and rubbed it over my arms, neck, and head. Dennis sniffed the rag, then gave it back. "It mess up my hair."

I told him that soap and water would wash it out, but he wouldn't take it. "Fine," I said. "Let the mosquitoes eat you up."

I sent the others off Weedwacking around the store. After he'd picked up the trash off the lot, I set him to mowing, watched him make a couple passes, then started toward the store to get my money from Bunk. I turned and saw Dennis smacking at the mosquitoes on his arms and the back of his neck and guiding the mower with one hand—just what I told him never to do. Then the mower hit something and died.

Dennis left it and sat down in the truck. I tipped the mower on its side. A coil of TV cable was wrapped around the blade, locking a \$110 engine.

*You apologize to me!*

*Don't hit him! He's a boy!*

*Stop mothering him! He'll learn not to tear up my tools!*

Lonnie walked up, gunning the Weedwacker, and asked what happened. He had that silly-ass grin on his face like he expected to see a fight.

I lifted the mower into the back of the truck, then got a spare from the trailer.

"I'll do it," Lonnie said. "Or we'll never get done."

"Dennis has got to learn to finish his job," I said.

I got Dennis out of the truck, his arms and face covered with mashed mosquitoes. I wiped his arms with the diesel-fuel rag, then cranked the mower and said, "Keep your head out of your ass, son. And hurry up so we can eat."

**F**riday afternoon of that first week we quit at four-thirty, and as soon as Lonnie, Tom, and Buford got their pay they went to the bank to cash their checks. I was driving into town and had just set the thermos top on the dash and poured the last of my coffee into it when I saw his green polyester pants and yellow shirt walking along the highway. I picked him up. All week I hadn't said much to him because it was enough trying to keep him from mowing over his own foot. I asked him where his home was, and he started rocking back and forth and said, "Barren Lake." Barren Lake is a couple counties west of Sellersville.

Then he began snapping his knees open and shut and said, "Him hit me."

I thought he meant one of the crew, and looked at him and asked him who.

He whined like a pup. "Her hit me."

I was reaching for my coffee when Dennis opened the door and tried to jump out. I pulled him by the arm back across the seat next to me, stopped the truck, leaned over him, closed the door, and locked it. All the way into town he hit and kicked at me. I wanted to hit him and say, *Shut up that goddamned blubbering.* But he wasn't my son.

When I let him off at his house, he marched across the lawn to the front porch past Mary Sterne watering the plants. She called after him as he slammed through the front



or, then set her watering can  
wn and came out to me.

I told her what had happened, and  
e pushed her glasses up on her  
se and put her hands on her hips.  
Dennis had an extremely traumatic  
childhood."

"How in hell was I supposed to  
ow?"

She tucked her hair behind her  
r. "You do now, Mr. Andrews."

She went back in the  
house.

**M**y father's old double-cab In-  
ternational truck sits three in the  
ont, three in the back, and every  
orning the boys flipped a coin to  
cide who had to sit beside Dennis.  
brought my lunch every day, but  
asionally when we were out by  
e interstate I stopped at a fast-food  
ace to give us a treat. None of  
em would sit with Dennis. They  
e enough to choke a horse, but  
ennis always ate a single hamburg-  
, no pop, no fried potatoes, and he  
pt his arm around the tray, guard-  
g his food. I never saw him chew.  
e stuck half the hamburger in his

mouth and swallowed it whole, then  
rocked back and forth at the table.  
One time when we ate out a couple  
high school girls came in and the  
boys were eyeing them, and then  
Lonnie started whispering around,  
and they got to giggling at Dennis.  
We were on our way to the next job  
when we passed these same girls rid-  
ing bicycles along the side of the  
road. Lonnie sat in the back with his  
arm hanging out the window and  
yelled, "Can I be your bicycle seat?"  
Dennis sat beside me. Lonnie  
nudged Dennis and said, "Was that a  
boy or girl on that bicycle?"

"Her girl," Dennis said.

Lonnie asked him how he knew,  
and Buford and Tom started snicker-  
ing. Dennis grabbed his chest like he  
had tits and said, "Me see her."

"She said she likes you," Lonnie  
said, then burst out laughing.

I stopped at Ray Sipe's filling sta-  
tion and sent Dennis in to get a bag of  
ice for the water jug. I turned around  
in the seat and told Lonnie, "You  
know better than to make fun of  
somebody who can't defend himself."

"What's with you, Mr. Andrews?"

he said. "He can't work, and you let  
him get away with anything. I was  
just shooting the shit."

I said, "You're fixing to shoot your  
ass right out of a job."

The next morning we were at the  
shop ready to go and there was no  
Lonnie. I called his house and he said  
that he quit and for me to mail him  
his check. He didn't have the com-  
mon courtesy to tell me to my face,  
and I told him if he wanted his mon-  
ey to come and get it. He never did.

The others still didn't pal around  
with Dennis, but they  
didn't tease him either.

**D**ennis seemed to find himself  
on the Weedwacker. Maybe it was  
because it made him slow down and  
be careful, but over the weeks he got  
so he did a nice job going around  
things. He learned to put gas and oil  
in the mowers and clean the grass  
from under them, and when it was his  
turn to sweep up the shop, he did a  
better job than the rest. Dennis imi-  
tated everything anybody did around  
him. If somebody said something fun-  
ny or a song came over the radio,

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Dennis mocked it. "I smoke, I live, since I was five." So Dennis started smoking four packs a day. One time Tom and Buford were horsing around and Buford shot Tom the finger, and the rest of the day Dennis went around giving cars, birds, the sun, everything, the finger. He cut his bangs out of his eyes and held his head up and was proud of himself. He told me that ten people lived at that house and each had certain responsibilities. They kept a cat and dog, and somebody had to feed them and clean out their pen. One laundered, and the ones who couldn't cook cleaned the house. It was Dennis's job to mow the yard and get the groceries. They all ate at the table together and had to be in bed by ten o'clock.

On his breaks he would practice adding columns of numbers and would work long-division problems and ask me to check them. He held the pen like it was an ice pick. I could barely read his handwriting.

Buford and Tom snickered, but I told them that at least he was trying to improve himself, that they'd sit around on their asses and let everybody pass them by.

"Me go to school and get a job. Me mow yards," Dennis said.

Buford said, "Shit. You can't even read."

"Me can so read."

Buford took Dennis's cigarettes. He said, "Read that."

"Pall Mall," Dennis said.

"It's Pell Mell, you dumb-ass," Buford said.

I said, "Professor, you'd better give your diploma back."

One Monday morning Dennis came to work and didn't say anything all day. I asked him what was wrong, but he wouldn't talk. That evening after work I stopped at the Greyhound Supermarket and ran into Brother Tupper Harris. He baptized me when I was twelve and preached my parents' funerals. He stopped his basket alongside mine and said that yesterday the Church of Christ had sent a van to where Dennis lived and took Dennis to Sunday school, and that after the sermon when they were singing

about the blood of the lamb, Dennis had started crying.

Brother Harris looked up and down the grocery aisle, then said that afterward he had asked Dennis, "Son, what was you crying about?" and the boy had said, "I feel bad for that lamb." Brother Harris stepped back laughing and almost choked on the chew of tobacco in his mouth.

I said, "My Bible says to *help* the afflicted and orphans."

He cleared his throat and here came that righteous look of his, but I'd be damned if I was gonna hear one of *his* sermons. I put my finger right in his face and said, "And don't it say that the angels in heaven rejoice when somebody tries to change himself?"

"You got no business pointing the finger of scorn at *me*, Caleb Andrews," he said. "It's been *years* since you even darkened the door of a church. Why, when was the last time you prayed?"

I said, "I'll step behind a tree and talk to God myself. You nice gentle loving churchgoers with your wagging tongues, your prayers never go any higher than your own ears."

I drove straight to the McKinney place. Bedford Street was quiet except for Ray Sipe mowing his yard. Nobody answered at the front door, so I went around back to the garden. There were giant sunflowers around its fence. Two rows of sweet corn, tomatoes, beans, cabbage, onions, squash, and carrots all growing on raised beds.

Mary Sterne was bent over pulling beets. She was barefoot and wore a tank top and a pair of gym shorts, and when she saw me she walked the row and met me at the gate.

"Did you dig those raised beds by yourself, Miss Sterne?" I asked her.

"Dennis helped," she said. "Call me Mary." She wiped the sweat off her nose, pushed up her granny glasses, then pointed at the nasturtiums planted around the potato vines and said she didn't use insecticide but planted certain kinds of flowers around certain kinds of vegetables. "But I can't get Dennis to pick the potato bugs," she said. Her legs and underarms were as hairy as any man's. I was starting to get a

hard-on, so I kept to the other side of the gatepost. I asked her when Dennis was.

"He's inside. You're welcome to stay for dinner, Mr. Andrews."

Ray Sipe drove the riding mower around the corner of his house, not watching where he was going. His tongue would stretch from here to the Gulf of Mexico.

I said, "I've got work to do at the shop."

Three women were in the kitchen fixing supper, and they told me Dennis was upstairs cleaning the TV room. There was a white Siamese cat mewing all upset at the top of the stairs. I walked down the hall, passed a bathroom just as the toilet flushed, and found Dennis in the front room sitting on the edge of the couch watching *The Three Stooges*. The vacuum cleaner stood in the middle of the floor, its cord snaking back to the wall outlet. I sat down in a straight chair and was going to tell Dennis not to go back to the Church of Christ when down the hall a door slammed and somebody shouted. Dennis got up and turned the TV to the evening news as this fat-ass pranced into the room and ran Dennis through this long soul-brother routine, shaking hands three different ways, slapping palms. This man wore a tight T-shirt and cutoff sweatpants pulled high in his crotch. His legs were pale, smooth like he'd shaved them, and covered with scars by crab-lice bites. His hair was white blond and wet-combed back in wings that stuck to the sides of his head. I stood up and introduced myself. Just speaking to me seemed to bother him.

He said his name was James Nass. His palm was wet, oily wet.

The three of us stood close together, but Dennis wouldn't look at us. He kept glancing at the TV.

James Nass looked me in the eyes. "Dennis said you need somebody." Half his voice was southern, but he'd get three quarters of the way through a word and roll it out in a northern brogue. He wheezed like he had asthma.

"No, I found a man," I said, and he knew I was lying.

He coughed in my face, and his



death stunk like cigarettes and  
ugh drops. "Sure." Then he told  
ennis to stop by his room.  
When James Nass left, Dennis  
med the TV off. "Him move here  
at week."

"Don't fool with him," I said. "In  
e army we called clowns like him  
rewballs.' They get you in trouble  
it won't get you out. And don't go  
ck to the Church of Christ; it only  
drives an enmity between  
you and everybody else."

Independence Day I took Dennis  
hing. Mary answered the door. I  
ve her a box of my son's books  
out trains, and she put it in the hall  
id came back out. She wore hiking  
orts, a man's white shirt, and un-  
neath you could see a navy polka-  
ot bikini top. She shouted into the  
ouse to Dennis that I was there,  
en asked if she could come too.

I said, "Do you know how to fish?"  
She brought her hand from be-  
nd her back and gave me a plastic  
b full of fat night crawlers. "Got  
em from the garden. Can I come  
not?"

I made Dennis wear my life jack-  
. He sat in the front of the boat,  
Mary sat in the middle, I sat in the  
back and rowed. When we came to  
ie shady shallow cove where I al-  
ays fish, Mary said to go past, to a  
ank, and I said, "I thought you  
ere fishing."

"Me? Stick a worm on a hook? I'd  
e. I came to work on my tan." She  
ot out and climbed up the bank,  
en spread out her towel and began  
buttoning her shirt.

Dennis looked like he was watch-  
ing a murder. I nudged him with the  
andle and gave him the oar.

Mary lay down quickly, and all I  
ould see was the bottoms of her  
et.

I paddled us back to the cove and  
ot Dennis started. I was determined  
e was going to catch a fish. I cast  
ie line out next to a tree that had  
ullen in the water where the fish  
ere likely to be, then gave Dennis  
ie rod and reel and showed him  
ow to crank the line in just quick  
ough to spin the lure. He lit one  
igarette off the butt of another and  
umped the butt in the lake.

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fore and all the smart things James ass had said. He had always walked work, but this James Nass had an d '57 Chevy and started driving m, and while we were servicing the owers, James sat in his car and ayed his radio or poked around the op, nosing into everything and ssing. Buford and Tom were men, big as me, but they didn't know at to do with him when he talked al loud and fast in that half-ass orthern brogue. I'd hitch the truck the trailer and pull out of the op, lock up, and he'd be leaning ainst his car. I'd stand by the truck or and stare at him until finally d'd creep his car across the lot and it to the street. He'd even follow us om job to job, park in the nearest ade, lean the seat back and doze, d every five or ten minutes motion ennis over. Then at the end of the y when I came in, he'd be sitting ere, radio blasting. Mary said that metimes when Dennis went to the ocery now he'd make one of his ends push the basket and walked far in front and ignored him like a boss.

**T**hen we mowed Miss Roxie ardy's yard. Miss Roxie is in her late venties, lives alone—has ever since er husband died—and still tries to ep up with everything that goes on. was about eight in the morning, d she came out with her straw hat ed on her head and followed Dennis the side of her house where she ew a fence of red peonies. I didn't ant her to, but she held them up so ennis could mow under the blossms. And he ran the front wheel of s mower under the fence. He didn't ut off the engine and then unhang e wheel; he jerked until he broke e bottom strand of fence, then went n mowing like nothing had hapened. When we finished, Miss Roxie ough out a box of ice cream and od on the cistern rock and gave us ch an ice cream cone. Dennis's face as dirty. She gave Dennis his and id, "Son, you got something black ound your mouth."

Dennis said, "You got something ack between your legs," then inned at Buford and Tom, and ey looked at me.

Miss Roxie said, "Boy, somebody should've drowned you in the bath-water."

I apologized to Miss Roxie, then sent Dennis to the truck. When we got away from her house, I threw his ice cream out the window.

The next morning there was no Dennis. We gassed up the mowers and loaded them on the trailer, put new blades on the Weedwackers, and by then it was ten after six and still no Dennis. I was on the phone with Mary when James Nass's car pulled into the lot. Dennis came in

the garage door, stumbling drunk. Buford and Tom sat down on the back of the trailer and started giggling. I went out, and James Nass was sitting on his heels in the shop door by the gas cans.

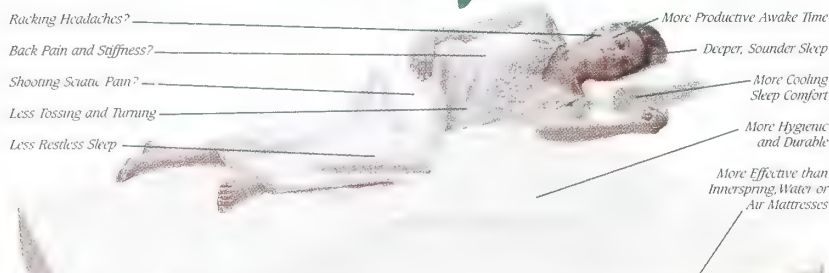
"Get that goddamned cigarette out of your mouth," I said.

He wore a blue muscle shirt, camouflage shorts, and rubber shower sandals. He stood up and flicked his cigarette out the door.

I said, "And haul your sorry ass off my property."

He made big eyes and whistled.

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Dennis was down on his knees in the gravel, puking hamburgers.

"I'll arrest you for terroristic threatening," James Nass said. He looked at Buford and Tom. "Then you'll have to find some new butt buddies."

They started up to jump him, but James Nass backed out to his car and drove off laughing and scooting gravel all the way to the street. I grabbed Dennis up by the arm and set him down in my office and made him drink all my thermos of coffee.

I made him look at me. I said, "You work today and then you're done. I'm not having a drunk work for me."

"Me not drunk."

I gave him a clean T-shirt of mine and said, "Don't back-talk me. Mary is going to bring you over here tomorrow morning to get your check. Now get your ass in that truck and get to work."

We had two jobs that morning, the nursing home and the grounds around Hensley's Ford. I took Dennis off the mower and kept him on the Weedwacker, thinking that the twenty-pound engine on his back and having to stoop and go slow and concentrate would work the drunk out of him.

The haze and humidity burned off at noon, and it was in the low nineties. Dennis was pale and white around the mouth and didn't eat lunch. He sat in the truck with his head on the dash.

The job that afternoon was Lake-side Apartments. There wasn't a big lawn to mow, only small patches of grass between the buildings. At the back of the apartments were little concrete patios where the tenants set out flowers and special shrubs, and that was the tedious part: edging around the patio while somebody stood there in his house slippers telling you to be careful.

Buford and Tom were mowing, I sent Dennis to Weedwack. I was at the truck gassing a mower when a woman in a bathing suit walked up. "I was lying out on my patio," she said, jabbing her finger in my face, "when that goon-looking moron that works for you cut down my yucca." She threw a yucca stalk onto the back of the trailer.

I went across the parking lot around the side of the building, and there was Dennis sitting under a tree. When he saw me, he got up and ran to where James Nass was Weedwacking around an air-conditioning unit. It took me five long steps across the courtyard and kick James Nass in the ass. He swung the Weedwacker at me, and I stepped out the way and there was Dennis in my place. It slashed his face from ear to ear. I could see his jawbone exposed and the sides of his teeth, and then the blood came out of his mouth in a sheet that stuck to his shirt like a bird.

I kicked James Nass in the nut and as he bent over I pulled the Weedwacker off his shoulder and hit him over the head with the engine. I got on top of him, pinned his elbow under my knees, and hit him for every lash my drunken father hit me with a razor strap, every drink I ever drank, every time I see my dead son's face, eyes wide and mouth screaming when my truck pins him to his car every day of the nine years I spent in the penitentiary, every night I walked up with my palm flat on the mattress where my ex-wife slept, every time my father and wife and son jumped out of the ground and throw the dead arms around my neck and my father bites my ear, my wife bites my breast, and my son kisses me with the taste of his clean jeans and aftershave and my wife's powdery nightgown and my father's piss in his trousers smother me.

**T**he first thing I saw when I woke up was the cement ceiling through the empty mattress springs of the top bunk. There was the same toilet with no lid, the same sink that dripped water constantly, the same cuss words and dirty drawings scratched into the walls. I got off the bunk and stood and saw the other drunks in the other cell watching me, and in the aisle outside my cell was my wife and Sheriff Lawler and his deputies. My wife's face was white as a sheet of paper. The sheriff and deputies watched me from under their broad brims. "We found you in the next county," Sheriff Lawler said. "You had drove out in the middle of an apple orchard..."



My wife wiped her eyes with a umpled tissue and said it like she as standing up before her class, citing them a fact they had to mem-ize for a test: "You ran over and lled your son."

I sat down on the bunk and stared rough the bars at the other empty ll.

Sheriff Lawler came through the or from his office, opened the cell or, and sat down beside me. I didn't ove or look him in the face.

I asked him about Dennis.

Sheriff Lawler sighed and scratched s chin whiskers and said that Dennis as laid up in the Sellersville Hospital th four hundred stitches in his face. he Weedwacker had cut off his ngue. He stared at the side of my ead until I looked at him. He said mes Nass was in the VA Hospital at ort Buell with a broken nose, a acked skull, crushed throat, and one e gouged out. He took off his hat, ran s hand through his hair, then fid- ed with his hatband. He said, "The oman at Lakeside Apartments says mes Nass took the Weedwacker away om the Hatchett boy and destroyed er property, and when you went out stop it in the fight the boy got hit. that how it happened?"

I said it was, and he said, "So you as taking up for the boy?"

"I was."

"Mary Sterne says that after you lled her asking where the boy was, e drove over to your shop but you'd eady gone, and then she drove all ver looking for you and finally saw ur truck at Lakeside Apartments. e saw you nearly kill James Nass. e left." I looked at him.

"When I went over to get her atement, she'd packed up that little ur and was heading back up east herever she came from. From what e said, there's another counselor, a an, supposed to arrive later today." I did not know what to do. "How ome she left?"

"I guess you scared her half to eath." He stood, hitched up his belt ver his gut, and told me to come n, he'd drive me home.

On the way I got him to stop at e hospital. At the nurse's station hen we asked where Dennis was, e nurses stopped writing in their

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### SOLUTION TO THE APRIL PUZZLE

#### NOTES FOR "THEME AND VARIATIONS—IV"

Note: The Theme-words (and their variations) are PARSELY (SPARELY, PARLEYS, PLAYERS, REPLAYS—*anagrams*); SAGE (EMERALD, LEAF, CELADON, MALACHITE—*shades of green*); ROSEMARY (CLOONEY, HARRIN, DEL AMP, MURPHY—*actresses*); and THYME (ETHYL, PITHY, YOUTH, HYATT—*successive displacements of "THY"*). Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (\*).

ACROSS: 11. ant-elope; 12. in-rag (rev.); 14. r(l)ot; 17. hidden; 18. f(rug)al(l); 20. \*; 22. devoi\*-d; 25. pun; 27. s(wart)hy; 29. (i)s-real\*; 31. hidden; 35. lid-o; 40. pun; 41. (de)coy; 42. homophone; 44. \*; 45. E.-yes; 47. Mets-Y's (rev.); 48. \*; 52. she-a; 53. (dul)lard; 54. tur(n)keys. DOWN: 2. \*; 3. yet-i(identified); 4. \*; 8. (old-N)Oah-u(pset); 9. \*; 10. two mngs.; 13. R.(l-go)R.s; 16. homophone; 21. \*; 23. hidden; 28. \*; 34. as-cent; 37. \*; 38. mus(s)es; 39. i-dee; 46. ye-LP; 47. Ares (rev.); 49. Ma.-E; 50. a-R.C.; 51. hidden.

SOLUTION TO APRIL DOUBLE ACROSTIC (NO. 172). RAY PARKER: RV HAVING FUN YET? Alaskan mosquitoes aren't like the ones we've known ... They're ... live switchblades. ... The moment we ... ventured outside, a swarm of hungry dive bombers descended upon us. We danced ... from one foot to the other, slapping ourselves silly.

CONTEST RULES: Send the quotation, the name of the author, and the title of the work, together with your name and address, to Double Acrostic No. 173, *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by May 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. The solution will be printed in the June issue. Winners of the March Double Acrostic (No. 171) are Clement Poussin, Miami, Florida; Eric Robinson, Cincinnati, Ohio; and Geoff Wyss, New Orleans, Louisiana.

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files and charts and pretended not to watch, but when I was out of their sight I heard their chair wheels squeak and their chair backs pop as they rolled together. *Oh, you remember. He killed his son.*

Dennis had a private room at the end of the hall. Dr. Hockman stepped out of Dennis's room. So fat that the legs of his stethoscope didn't meet around his neck, thick bifocals that made his eyes fill the entire lens, he dug a pack of cigarettes from the pocket of his white coat, then lit one. "So you saw it happen?"

I stared into his nosy face.

"Caleb wants to see the boy," the sheriff said.

"I put him under sedation," Dr. Hockman said, the smoke coming out of his mouth as he spoke. He puffed again, then took a last look at me, then opened the door.

No flowers, no cards, only a plastic water pitcher turned upside down on a gray steel bedside table. A radiator beneath the window, daylight on the metal trunk of the IV tree, the yellow tube running into the top of his wrist. His feet stuck out from under the sheet, and I covered them with a blue blanket. I leaned over the bed rail. His head was completely bundled and they had cut two holes for his eyes. Stitches crawled down the side of his neck and diagonally across his chest.

"It hit him at an angle," Dr. Hockman said, squinting at the smoke stinging his eyes and tracing his fat finger above the stitches.

I asked him what had happened to Dennis's tongue, and he looked at the sheriff like I was crazy. He said, "The paramedics couldn't find it. No good anyhow. By now it's dead."

**M**y truck was parked in the corner of the yard under the tree I chain the dog to, and she barked and jumped in circles, glad to see me. It didn't make any difference to her what I did; my hand was just as good as any. I fed and watered her, shelled a couple ears of corn for the chickens, and when the phone started ringing I let the sonofabitch ring and sat down on the back doorstep, a limestone step, the step where I'd sit after my

wife would take Robert and go to his mother's because I'd be on a crying drunk. On the west side of the house it was still cool, and across the field saw my neighbor's Holstein stringing out from the back of the milk park into the sun, the sun on the tops of the trees around his house, the sun on the TV antenna, and wondered what I'd done had made the new. Just across the field cars and trucks were parked around Ray Sipe's white gas station, and no doubt they'd see the sheriff drive by and were up there now sitting around saying, Well, heard this, and another says, Well, one of the boys that works for him says that. I sat there and looked at the dead grape arbor where I grew grapes that she made jelly and I made wine at the tractor tire where she set out begonias, then at the growed-up half-acre we used to raise a garden in; then I imagined I heard the Volkswagen engine downshifting, heard it come up the gravel drive, and the dog started barking and stood woofing and looking out the corner of her eyes at me, heard the emergency brake pull up, heard the door slam, and with the engine idling, Mary, in a pink dress and black belt around her waist, Mary came around the side of the house and the instant I stood she put her arms around me, and I let her cry and I cried, and we stood on the step at the back of the house, pressed together, and I kept her shoulders in my hands and her itchy braid between my arms and her back and her cold stick glasses lenses on my chest. Then the night is clear, a new-moon black, yet the security lights around the parking lot and between the buildings over ride the stars. The katydids scratch and sing in the culvert beside the road. A frog hopscoatches across the surface of the lake. Hidden behind shrubs, the air-conditioning units kick on. The lawn rises to a knoll where the wooden deck overlooks the swimming pool. My rake lies on the walk leading to the patios where I see the black shapes of flowers and deck chairs. At a window on the second floor, a man in a white T-shirt locks his sliding door, then draws the curtain. The water sprinklers shut off and mists of water chill my back. I lie on my stomach. The wet has soaked



the skin, and as I inch forward on my elbows my boots squeak in the grass. From the parking lot, both sides of the walk, the strips of lawn between the patios to this circle of grass in the center of the courtyard, Mary and I have found a cigarette butt, a marble, a bottle cap, and a Bazooka Joe comic. Mary crawls on her hands and knees, pin light in her mouth, sweeps her hands through the grass. I press my forehead to the ground, shut my eyes, then run my fingers through the mower's wheel's track. It's here. We've found it and can give it back to him. At the phone is ringing, the dog is at the end of her chain barking and eating her tail in the dirt, Jesus says the dead bury the dead but the dead bury the living; the dead tell me what they should have done nine years ago and act like I can return and do it, and I try to do like they say. I obey, at the instant I do, they say, "But you didn't do it then," and I begin the whole cycle again. ■

#### Key Index Sources

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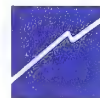
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# THE LONG GOOD-BYE

Mother's Day in federal prison

By Amanda Coyne

**Y**ou can spot the convict-moms here in the visiting room by the way they hold and touch their children and by the single flower that is perched in front of them—a rose, a tulip, a daffodil. Many of these mothers have untied the bow that attaches the flower to its silver-and-red cellophane wrapper and are using one of the many empty soda cans at hand as a vase. They sit proudly before their flower-in-a-Coke-can, amid Hershey bar wrappers, half-eaten Ding Dongs, and empty paper coffee cups. Occasionally, a mother will pick up her present and bring it to her nose when one of the bearers of the single flower—her child—asks if she likes it. And the mother will respond the way that mothers always have and always will respond when presented with a gift on this day. “Oh, I just love it. It’s perfect. I’ll put it in the middle of my Bible.” Or, “I’ll put it on my desk, right next to your school picture.” And always: “It’s the best one here.”

But most of what is being smelled today is the children themselves. While the other adults are plunking coins into the vending machines, the mothers take deep whiffs from the backs of their



JENNIFER, PRISONER NUMBER 07235-029

children’s necks, or kiss and smell the backs of their knees, or take off their shoes and tickle their feet and then pull them close to their noses. They hold them tight and take in their own second scent—the scent assuring them that these are still their children and that they still belong to them.

**T**he visitors are allowed to bring in pockets full of coins, and today that Mother’s Day flower, and I know from previous visits to my older sister here at the Federal Prison Camp for women in Pekin, Illinois, that there is always an aberrant urge to gather immediately around the vending machines. The sandwiches are stale, the coffee weak, the candy bars the ones we always pass up in a conve-

nience store. But after we hand the children over to their mothers, we gravitate toward those machines. Like milling in the kitchen at a party. We all do it, and nobody knows why. Polite conversation ensues around the microwave while the popcorn is popping and the processed-chicken sandwiches are being heated. We ask one another where we are from, how long drive we had. An occasional whistle through the teeth, a shake of the head. “My, my, long way from home, huh?” “Staying

the Super 8 right up the road. Not a bad place.” “Stayed at the Econo Lodge last time. Wasn’t a good place at all. Never asking the questions we really want to ask: “What’s she in for?” “How much time’s she got left?” You never ask in the waiting room of a doctor’s office either. Eventually, all of us—fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, a few boyfriends, and very few husbands—return to the queen of the day, sitting at a fold-out table loaded with snacks prepared for five or so hours of a tempted normal conversation.

Most of the inmates are elaborately dressed, many in prison-crafted dresses and sweaters in bright blues and pinks. They wear meticulously applied makeup in corresponding hues, and their hair is replete with loops and curls—hair that only women with the

*Amanda Coyne is a graduate student in the MFA creative nonfiction program at the University of Iowa. This is her first published article.*



ne have the time for. Some of the tter seamstresses have crocheted sts and purses to match their out-. Although the world outside would ver accuse these women of making ute-couture fashion statements, the hers and the sons and the boyfriends d the very few husbands think they k beautiful, and they tell them so reatedly. And I can imagine the hours ent preparing for this visit—hours needles and hooks clicking over ghtly colored yards of yarn. The urs of discussing, dissecting, and gging about these visitors—espe- lly the men. Hours spent in the oth- world behind the door where we're t allowed, sharing lipsticks and mas- ras, and unraveling the occasional ir-tangled hot roller, and the brush- g out and lifting and teasing. . . and e giggles that abruptly change into ars without warning—things that fine any female-only world. Even, especially, if that world is a female federal prison camp.

While my sister Jennifer is with r son in the playroom, an inmate's oth-er comes over to introduce herself my younger sister, Charity, my broth- John, and me. She tells us about siting her daughter in a higher-secu- y prison before she was transferred re. The woman looks old and tired, d her shoulders sag under the weight her recently acquired bitterness. "Pit of fire," she says, shaking her ad. "Like a pit of fire straight from ll. Never seen anything like it. Like mething out of an old movie about isons." Her voice is getting louder d she looks at each of us with plead- g eyes. "My daughter was there. Don't en get me started on that place. omen die there." John and Charity and I silently ex- ange glances. "My daughter would come to the siting room with a black eye and I'd ink, 'All she did was sit in the car hile her boyfriend ran into the house.' e didn't even touch the stuff. Nev- even handled it." She continues to stare at us, each in m. "Ten years. That boyfriend talked id he got three years. She didn't ow anything. Had nothing to tell em. They gave her ten years. They

called it conspiracy. Conspiracy? Aren't there real criminals out there?" She asks this with hands outstretched, waiting for an answer that none of us can give her.

The woman's daughter, the con- spirator, is chasing her son through the maze of chairs and tables and through the other children. She's a twenty-four-year-old blonde, whom I'll call Stephanie, with Dorothy Hamill hair and matching dimples. She looks like any girl you might see in any shopping mall in middle Amer- ica. She catches her chocolate-brown son and tickles him, and they laugh and trip and fall together onto the floor and laugh harder.

Had it not been for that wait in the car, this scene would be taking place at home, in a duplex Stephanie would rent while trying to finish her two-year degree in dental hygiene or respira- tory therapy at the local community col- lege. The duplex would be spotless, with a blown-up picture of her and her son over the couch and ceramic uni- corns and horses occupying the shelves of the entertainment center. She would make sure that her son went to school every day with stylishly floppy pants, scrubbed teeth, and a good breakfast in his belly. Because of their difference in skin color, there would be occasional tension—caused by the strange looks from strangers, teachers, other mothers, and the bullies on the playground, who would chant after they knocked him down, "Your Momma's white, your Momma's white." But if she were home, their weekends and evenings would be spent together transcending those looks and healing those bruises. Now, how- ever, their time is spent eating visit- ing-room junk food and his school days are spent fighting the boys in the play- ground who chant, "Your Momma's in prison, your Momma's in prison."

He will be ten when his mother is released, the same age my nephew will be when his mother is let out. But Jen- nifer, my sister, was able to spend the first five years of Toby's life with him. Stephanie had Ellie after she was in- carcerated. They let her hold him for eighteen hours, then sent her back to prison. She has done the "tour," and her son is a well-traveled six-year-old. He has spent weekends visiting his mother in prisons in Kentucky, Texas,

Connecticut (the Pit of Fire), and now at last here, the camp—minimum se- curity, Pekin, Illinois.

Ellie looks older than his age. But his shoulders do not droop like his grand- mother's. On the contrary, his bitter- ness lifts them and his chin higher than a child's should be, and the childlike, wide-eyed curiosity has been replaced by defiance. You can see his emerging hostility as he and his mother play to- gether. She tells him to pick up the toy that he threw, say, or to put the deck of cards away. His face turns sullen, but she persists. She takes him by the shoulders and looks him in the eye, and he uses one of his hands to swat at her. She grabs the hand and he swats with the other. Eventually, she pulls him toward her and smells the top of his head, and she picks up the cards or the toy herself. After all, it is Mother's Day and she sees him so rarely. But her acquiescence makes him angrier, and he stalks out of the play- room with his shoulders thrown back.

Toby, my brother and sister and I as- sure one another, will not have these resentments. He is better taken care of than most. He is living with relatives in Wisconsin. Good, solid, middle- class, churchgoing relatives. And when he visits us, his aunts and his uncle, we take him out for adventures where we walk down the alley of a city and pre- tend that we are being chased by the "bad guys." We buy him fast food, and his uncle, John, keeps him up well past his bedtime enthralling him with sto- ries of the monkeys he met in India. A perfect mix, we try to convince one another. Until we take him to see his mother and on the drive back he asks the question that most confuses him, and no doubt all the other children who spend much of their lives in prison visiting rooms: "Is my Mommy a bad guy?" It is the question that most seri- ously disorders his five-year-old need to clearly separate right from wrong. And because our own need is perhaps just as great, it is the question that haunts us as well.

Now, however, the answer is rela- tively simple. In a few years, it won't be. In a few years we will have to explain mandatory minimums, and the war on drugs, and the murky conspiracy laws, and the enormous amount of money and time that federal agents pump in-



to imprison low-level drug dealers and those who happen to be their friends and their lovers. In a few years he might have the reasoning skills to ask why so many drug traffickers and rapists and child-molesters and, indeed, murderers are punished less severely than his mother. When he is older, we will somehow have to explain to him the difference between federal crimes, which don't allow for parole, and state crimes, which do. We will have to explain that his mother was taken from him for five years not because she was a drug dealer but because she made four phone calls for someone she loved.

But we also know it is vitally important that we explain all this without betraying our bitterness. We understand the danger of abstract anger, of being disillusioned with your country, and, most of all, we do not want him to inherit that legacy. We would still like him to be raised as we were, with the idea that we live in the best country in the world with the best legal system in the world—a legal system carefully designed to be immune to political mood swings and public hysteria; a system that promises to fit the punishment to the crime. We want him to be a good citizen. We want him to have absolute faith that he lives in a fair country, a country that watches over and protects its most vulnerable citizens: its women and children.

So for now we simply say, "Toby, your mother isn't bad, she just did a bad thing. Like when you put rocks in the lawn mower's gas tank. You weren't bad then, you just did a bad thing."

Once, after being given this weak explanation, he said, "I wish I could have done something really bad, like my Mommy. So I could go to prison too and be with her."

**W**e notice a circle forming on one side of the visiting room. A little boy stands in its center. He is perhaps nine years old, sporting a burnt-orange three-piece suit and pompadour hair. He stands with his legs slightly apart, eyes half-shut, and sways back and forth, flashing his cuffs and snapping his fingers while singing:

*Went to the Mexican market in L.A.  
Went to the store with the rest of the  
kids  
That's why the kids is a tramp*

He has a beautiful voice and it sounds vaguely familiar. One of the visitors informs me excitedly that the boy is the youngest Frank Sinatra impersonator and that he has been on television even. The boy finishes his performance and the room breaks into applause. He takes a sweeping bow, claps his miniature hands together, and points both little index fingers at the audience. "More. Later. Folks." He spins on his heels and returns to the table where his mother awaits him, proudly glowing. "Don't mess with the hair, Mom," we overhear. "That little boy's slick," my brother says with true admiration.

Sitting a few tables down from the youngest Frank Sinatra is a table of Mexican-Americans. The young ones are in white dresses or button-down oxfords with matching ties. They form a strange formal contrast to the rest of the rowdy group. They sit silently, solemnly listening to the white-haired woman, who holds one of the table's two roses. I walk past and listen to the grandmother lecture her family. She speaks of values, of getting up early every day, of going to work. She looks at one of the young boys and points a finger at him. "School is the most important thing. *Nada mas importante*. You get up and you go to school and you study, and you can make lots of money. You can be big. You can be huge. Study, study, study."

The young boy nods his head. "Yes, *abuelita*. Yes, *abuelita*," he says.

The owner of the other flower is holding one of the group's three infants. She has him spread before her. She coos and kisses his toes and nuzzles his stomach.

When I ask Jennifer about them, she tells me that it is a "mother and daughter combo." There are a few of them here, these combos, and I notice that they have the largest number of visitors and that the older inmate, the grandmother, inevitably sits at the head of the table. Even here, it seems, the hierarchical family structure remains intact. One could take a picture, replace the fast-food wrappers

with chicken and potatoes, and the families could be at any restaurant in the country, could be sitting at a dining room table, paying homage this day to the one who brought them into the world.

Back at our table, a black-haired Middle Eastern woman dressed in loose cottons and cloth shoes is whispering to my brother with a sense of urgency that makes me look toward my sister Charity with questioning eyes and a tilt of my head. Charity simply shrugs and resumes her conversation with a nineteen-year-old ex-New York University student—another conspirator of eight years.

Prison, it seems, has done little to quell the teenager's rebellious nature. She has recently been released from solitary confinement. She wears new retro-bellbottom jeans and black shoes with big clunky heels. Her hair is short, clipped perfectly ragged and dyed white—all except the roots, which are a stylish black. She has beautiful pale skin and beautiful red lips. She looks like any midwestern coed trying to escape her origins by claiming New York's East Village as home. She steals a tube of bleach from the laundry room, I learn later, in order to maintain that fashionable white hue. But stealing tubes of bleach is not what landed her in trouble. She committed the inexcusable act of defacing federal property. She took one of her government-issue shirts and wrote in permanent black magic marker, "I have been in your system. I have examined your system. And when she turned around it read, "I find it very much in need of repair."

But Charity has more important things to discuss with the girl than rebelling against the system. They are talking fashion. They talk prints versus plains, spring shoes, and spring dresses. Charity informs the girl that sling-back, high-heeled sandals and pastels are all the rage. She makes a disgusted face and says, "Damn! Pink and blues wash me out. I hate pastels. I don't have any pastels."

This fashion blip seems to be putting the girl into a deep depression. And Charity, attempting to lighten up the conversation, puts her nose toward the girl's neck.

"New Armani scent, Gio," my sister announces.

*Close table craps games with bar stools and  
and*



The girl perks up. She nods her ad. She calls one of the other inmates over.

Charity performs the same ritual: "oco Chanel." And again: "Paris, es St. Laurent."

The line gets longer, and the girls k excitedly to one another. It seems at Charity's uncanny talent for dining brand-name perfumes is perps nowhere on earth more appreciated than here with these sensory-rved inmates.

As Charity continues to smell necks d call out names, I turn back to my other and find that the woman who s speaking to him so intensely has ne. He stares pensively at the concrete wall ahead of him.

"What did she want?" I ask.

"She heard I was a sculptor. She nts me to make a bust, presented her name, for Qaddafi."

"A bust of what?"

"Of Qaddafi. She's from Libya. She is a freedom fighter. Her kids are med out to strangers here—foster mes. It's Qaddafi's twenty-eighth niversary as dictator in September. e knows him. He's mad at her now, t she thinks that he'll get over it d get her kids back to Libya if she es him a present."

"Obsession. Calvin Klein," I hear sister pronounce. The girls cheer in ison.

I get up and search for the girl. I int to ask her about her crime. I look the book room only to find the four-ot Frank Sinatra crooning "Some-ere over the Rainbow" to a group of ellbound children.

I ask Ponytail, one of the female ards, where the woman went. "Rule," e informs me. "Cannot be in the vis-ing room if no visitor is present. ould not have been here. Had to back to unit one." I have spoken to nytail a few times while visiting my ter and have yet to hear her use a sssessive pronoun, a contraction, or conjunction.

According to Jennifer, Ponytail has nted to be a prison guard since she is a little girl. She is one of the few nale guards here and she has been re the longest, mainly because the ale guards are continuously being ed for "indiscretions" with the inmates. But Ponytail doesn't mess

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around. She is also the toughest guard here, particularly in regard to the federal rules governing exposed skin. She is disgusted by any portion of the leg showing above the required eight-inch shorts length. In summer, they say, she is constantly whipping out her measuring tape and writing up those who are even a fraction of an inch off.

Last summer posed a particular problem for Ponytail, though. It seems that the shorts sold in the commissary were only seven inches from crotch to seam. And because they were commissary-issued, Ponytail couldn't censor them. So, of course, all the women put away their own shorts in favor of the commissary's. This disturbed Ponytail—a condition that eventually, according to one of the girls, developed into a low-grade depression. "She walked around with that sad old tape in her hands all summer, throwing it from one hand to the other and looking at our legs. After a while, not one of us could get her even to crack a smile—not that she's a big smiler, but you can get those corners to turn sometimes. Then she started looking downright sad, you know real depressed like."

Ponytail makes sure that the girls get proper medical care. Also none of the male guards will mess with them when she's around. But even if those things weren't true, the girls would be fond of Ponytail. She is in a way just another woman in the system, and perhaps no other group of women realizes the absolute necessity for female solidarity. These inmates know with absolute certainty what women on the outside only suspect—that men still hold ultimate power over their bodies, their property, and their freedom.

So as a token of this solidarity, they all agreed to slip off their federal shorts and put on their own. Ponytail perked up, the measuring tape appeared again with a vengeance, and quite a few of the shorts owners spent much of their free time that summer cleaning out toilet bowls and wiping the scuffs off the gym floor.

**I**t's now 3:00. Visiting ends at 3:30. The kids are getting cranky, and the adults are both exhausted and wired from too many hours of conversation, too much coffee and candy. The fa-

thers, mothers, sisters, brothers, and the few boyfriends, and the very few husbands are beginning to show signs of gathering the trash. The mothers the infants are giving their heads one last whiff before tucking them and the paraphernalia into their respective crying cases. The visitors meander toward the door, leaving the older children with their mothers for one last word. But the mothers never say what they want to say to their children. They say things like, "Do well in school," "Be nice to your sister," "Be good," "Aunt Betty, or Grandma." They do say, "I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry. I love you more than anything else in the world and I think about you every minute and I worry about you with a pain that shoots straight to my heart, a pain so great I think I will just buy you when I think of you alone, without me. I'm sorry."

We are standing in front of the double glass doors that lead to the outside world. My older sister holds her son, rocking him gently. They are both crying. We give her a look and she puts him down. Charity and I grasp each other's small hands, and the four of us walk through the doors. As we're walking out, my brother sings one of his lullabies to Toby.

"Take me out to the —" and Toby yells out, "Banana store!"

"Buy me some —"

"Bananas!!"

"I don't care if I ever come back. For it's root, root, root for the —"

"Monkey team!"

I turn back and see a line of women standing behind the glass walls. Some of them are crying, but many simply stare with dazed eyes. Stephanie is holding both of her son's hands, hers and speaking urgently to him. He is struggling, and his head is twisting violently back and forth. He frees one of his hands from her grasp, balls up his fist, and punches her in the face. Then he walks with purpose through the glass doors and out the exit. I look back at her. She is still in a crouched position. She stares, unblinkingly through those doors. Her hands have left her face and are hanging on the other side of her. I look away, but before I do, I see drops of blood drip from her nose, down her chin, and onto the shiny marble floor.



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Al Pritchard  
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### Weight Monologue

The last item in your "Index" for December 1996 stated that the amount of sunlight that hits the Earth each second is 4.3 pounds. It should have read 2 kilograms.

You no doubt arrived at your figure converting kilograms to pounds in the mistaken belief that 1 kilogram equals 2.2 pounds. This is a common error: the kilogram is a unit of mass, whereas the pound is a unit of force or weight. It is correct that the amount of the sunlight deposited on the Earth in 1 second is 2 kilograms, via Einstein's famous formula  $E = mc^2$ . (Light itself is massless, by the way, but its energy has an equivalent mass.) And it is true that on Earth 1 kilogram weighs 2.2 pounds. However, 1 kilogram weighs only 0.36 pounds on the moon, because its gravity is 6 times weaker than Earth's. If you bought a kilogram of sugar on the moon, for example, you would still have a kilogram of sugar when you returned to Earth. On the other hand, if you bought a pound of sugar on the moon, you'd have six pounds when you returned to Earth.

Your error is intriguing, though, because sunlight does exert a force on the Earth, which is equal to the incident solar power divided by the speed of light. The solar power is 1,400 Watts per square meter times the surface area of the Earth: a total of 0.18 billion billion Watts. The "weight" of the sunlight is therefore 5 billion Newtons. A Newton, the metric unit of force, is approximately equal to 0.22 pounds, or the weight of a small apple. Therefore, the correct value for the "amount" (i.e., force) of sunlight on the Earth is not 4.3 pounds but 130 million pounds.

Robert R. McCullough  
Champaign, Ill.

You deserve a factual look at...

## Those "West Bank" Settlements Are they really the "greatest obstacle to peace?"

In the context of the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians that have now been going on for almost three years, it is often asserted that the Israeli towns and villages (usually and with some derogation referred to as "settlements") in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") are possibly the most serious obstacle to peace. That has been and is being repeated so often that many have come to accept it as truth.

### What are the facts?

**A recap of history.** Some thumb-nail history may be in order. Large numbers of Jews have been living in these territories since biblical times. Most of the Arabs living there are in fact relative newcomers. "Palestine" is the entire area now covered by Israel including Judea/Samaria (the so-called "West Bank") and what is now the Kingdom of Jordan. It originally also included the Golan Heights, which later, in an agreement between England and France, were ceded to France, and to Syria as the successor in possession.

In 1922, contrary to the Mandate of the League of Nations, the British severed the entire area east of the Jordan and gave it to the Hashemite Arabs for their assistance in World War I. Thus, fully 75% of Palestine, all of which under the Mandate and under the terms of the Balfour Declaration was meant to be a home for the Jewish people, was lost for that purpose. Only the area west of the Jordan River was left for the Jewish settlement.

**How the West Bank became "Arab country."** In 1947, after decades of strife between Arabs and Jews, the British decided to relinquish the Mandate. The UN stepped in and proposed a partition plan under which the country (west of the River) was to be divided into respective Arab and Jewish areas. Jerusalem was to be internationalized. The Jews accepted the plan; the Arabs refused it out of hand. In 1948, on the twice truncated territory

allotted to them by the U.N., the Jews declared their independence and the state of Israel was born. On the same day, six Arab armies invaded the new-born state. In what can be described as an almost biblical miracle, the Jews defeated them. When an armistice was finally secured, however, TransJordan remained in possession of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem; Egypt remained in possession of the Gaza Strip. TransJordan renamed itself Jordan.

**The Six-Day War.** Once in possession of the "West Bank" and East Jerusalem, the Jordanians promptly pro-

**"Why should the Arab countries and the 'West Bank' be the only places in the world where Jews are not allowed to live?"**

ceeded to expel all Jews and systematically to desecrate and to destroy most Jewish sacred places, cemeteries and houses of worship. No Jews,

regardless of citizenship were allowed into the "West Bank" or East Jerusalem, the locale of the Western Wall, the holiest site in Judaism. In 1967, Egyptian president Abdel Nasser, joined by the same array of Arab armies that had unsuccessfully tried to destroy Israel at its birth in 1948, launched another war against Israel "to drive the Jews into the sea" and into oblivion, once and for all. But the Israelis utterly defeated the combined Arab might in the Six-Day War, one of the greatest military victories in history. When the dust of war settled, the Israelis had not only retained their national territory, but had repossessed the territories of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), the eastern part of Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and had totally occupied Egypt's vast Sinai Peninsula.

It is clear from this abbreviated history that the Israeli claim to the "West Bank" is far stronger than that of the Arabs. About 200,000 Jews now live there. And why shouldn't they? Why should the Arab countries and the "West Bank" be the only places in the whole wide world where Jews are not allowed to live? How can 200,000 Jews living among one million Arabs be the "greatest threat to peace"? Why should anybody be concerned about a new settlement of a few mobile homes on some barren Judean hills as the "greatest threat to peace," when we seem to be oblivious and totally unconcerned about the unrelenting hostility of the Arab countries, the de facto incorporation of Lebanon by Syria, the Scuds and the chemical weapons still remaining in Iraq, and the relentless and ominous build-up of Syria's missile forces?

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## The Good, the Bad, and the Non-native

I was fascinated to learn about the politics of promoting native plants in Nazi Germany from Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn's article "Garden-Variety Xenophobia" [Readings, February]. However, I was disappointed that the author makes no mention of the many thoughtful phytogeographers, gardeners, and plant restorationists who use the historical record to learn which plants existed in a particular area prior to mass degradation by agriculture and other human development. Gardening with these "native" plants is one way to restore the balance of plants, pollinators, and soil micro-organisms in their corresponding, distinct natural divisions.

There is no such thing as a "bad" plant, as thoughtful gardeners will agree, but there have been many bad horticultural and agricultural initiatives using both exotic and native species that have threatened the original habitats of many plants and animals.

Carol Davis

Jefferson City, Mo.

Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn may know the history of horticulture, but he should read more broadly in agriculture and ecology. The condemnation of some non-native plants as "aggressive invaders" is far from a simplistic notion. In the western U.S., cheatgrass and knapweed have rendered useless huge tracts of former grazing land. Russian olive and tamarisk have invaded riverbanks all over the country, irreversibly altering habitat for birds and other wildlife. Purple loosestrife clogs wetlands across North America, impeding water flow and displacing food plants for ducks and geese. The list goes on and on.

These plants, introduced from Europe and Asia, cause profound harm to agricultural lands and natural ecosystems. They are unmistakably and undeniably non-native, aggressive, invasive weeds. And they are bad.

John Sanderson

Fort Collins, Colo.

## The Triumph of the Body

It was extraordinary to read letters about Bob Shacochis's "Missing Children" [October 1996] in your January 1997 issue. I have never read a more hateful set of responses or a set of responses that more clearly misread both the author's tone and his intent. I don't know Shacochis (although I do teach nonfiction writing at the University of Iowa), but I were he I would wonder whether anyone realized that the subject "Missing Children" is the continuing power—in this pale and abstract time—of biological desire. The body still triumphs, even when it falters. The terrifying story of Shacochis's wife's abortion during her teenage years is the story of what happens when humans act out of their confusions about what the body does. The story of his and his wife's inability to conceive is a tale of how bound up modern technology has become in matters that are anything but modern.

For days now I've been trying to intellectualize the nature of these vicious responses. I've been trying to tell myself, for example, that as nonfiction has taken on more of the characteristics of fiction, the narrator becomes less a meditative form and more of a character; hence readers are more likely to respond to him as if he were fictional, and to make passionate judgments about his self-characterization. I try to remind myself, too, that any discussion of childbearing, abortion, feminism, or class in our culture is so laden with disappointment and anger that other emotions simply will not show through. Yet, for me, these rationalizations are finally no comfort. It distresses me deeply to think that I have arrived at a moment where heartfelt exploration, not only of love but of the imperatives of the body, taken as mere whining or self-indulgence or an attack on adoption or assault on insurance-premium payers. The selfishness that readers show in Shacochis's memoir is more clearly and frighteningly represented than their own shameful words.

Tom Simmons

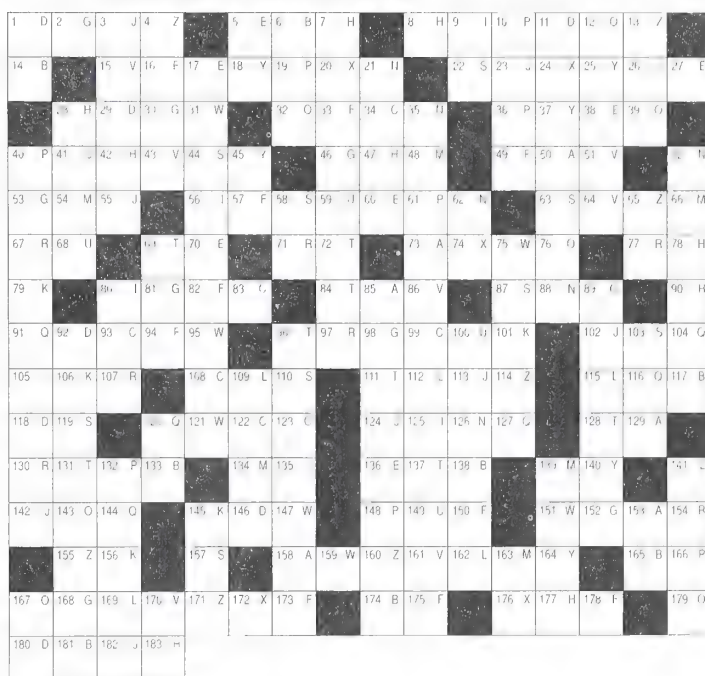
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# DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 173

By Thomas H. Middleton

The diagram, when filled in, will contain a quotation from a published work. The numbered squares in the diagram correspond to the numbered blanks under the WORDS. The WORDS form an acrostic: the first letter of each spells the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken. The letter in the upper right-hand corner of each square indicates the WORD containing the letter to be entered in that square. Contest rules and the solution to last month's puzzle appear on page 67.



## CLUES

## WORDS

- A. Search for, as in a reference (2 wds.) 158 129 50 153 85 73
- B. Renounce, relinquish 6 181 138 174 165 14 133 117
- C. Forced by heavy blows 93 108 122 34 99 83
- D. Deal, distribute (2 wds.) 11 180 118 29 146 92 1
- E. "I pledge myself to a \_\_\_ for the American people," said FDR on July 2, 1932 (2 wds.) 70 60 5 27 17 136 38
- F. Destruction of force or strength 178 49 150 173 16 82 94 57 33 175
- G. Ran through, practiced 168 81 53 15 98 39 50 46
- H. Troutlike member of the family Coregonidae 28 8 78 42 183 90 47 7 171
- I. Junkie 56 125 135 80 26 9 105
- J. Legitimate 41 182 113 142 102 23 194 5 3
- K. Well-dressed U types in London, e.g. 101 106 145 156 79
- L. Wife of Iphus (Class. myth.) 162 100 109 116 141 11

- M. Moved with a thrust 66 134 163 139 54 48
- N. Crude representation of someone 35 62 52 88 21 126
- O. Link 167 39 32 123 143 179 12 76
- P. Equitable, just 10 19 36 166 148 40 132 61
- Q. Snacks 104 91 127 116 144 120
- R. Washington was "The Cincinnatus of \_\_\_," said Byron (2 wds., "Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte") 97 77 67 107 154 130 71
- S. Challenged the credibility of 133 58 22 44 157 63 87 119 115
- T. Only fun, sort of uncool (3 wds.) 136 84 111 96 12 131 69 125
- U. Cast off 59 149 100 68
- V. Had a tall 170 43 64 86 51 15 161
- W. Lones 95 121 31 75 159 147 151
- X. Atract beginning 74 20 24 172 176
- Y. Intransigent 140 45 164 37 18 25
- Z. Devotion 65 155 13 160 114 171 4



## Follow the Dots

By Richard F. Murray Jr.

**C**lued answers are to be entered with the first letter in the first numbered square given and the last in the second numbered square, with the intervening letters placed in a follow-the-dots chain of random shape, moving from a square with a dot to a contiguous square with a dot, in any direction—up, down, forward, back, or any diagonal—until the last letter is reached. For example, the word ANSWER might be entered as: S N V W

R I

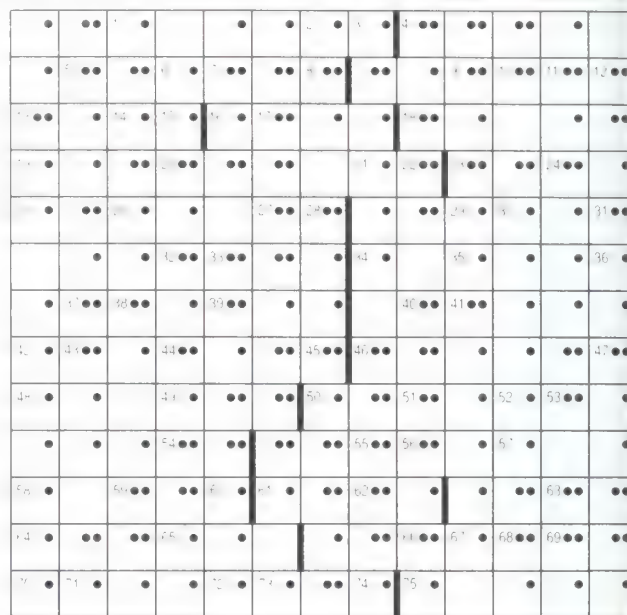
Squares containing two dots indicate that that letter is part of two different answers.

The completed diagram is a list of related words (indicated by heavy bar-lines), two or three per line, reading across, and not running over to the next line. One square in each column contains no dot, and therefore no letter from a clued answer. The letters entered in these squares, to be deduced from the across words, are also to be entered in the spaces below the columns, where they will spell out an appropriate final addition to the list.

Answers to clues are common words; two are proper names, and one is a foreign word. As always, mental punctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 67.

CLUES

- 1-5 Serious undertaking may result in this (5)
- 2-24 Strickler for unlimited titillation? Quite the reverse! (6)
- 4-12 Man gets funny-looking drawers (7)
- 6-8 Calling time out, with a hesitant sound (6)
- 7-3 Donkey reversing old-time scream in cartoons (6)
- 10-9 Putting a new handle on loop that holds back locks? (8)
- 12-10 Lay in rest, deranged without love (5)
- 13-26 Bank to demand money on sign of failure (4)
- 14-13 Set up, like a house under construction (6)
- 17-27 Connected in a modern way and single, holds nothing back (6)
- 18-36 Achieve an aim without doing rather do (5)
- 19-37 Ottoman holding a well-brought-up German dish (5)
- 20-33 Continental immortalized one feature of Depardieu (4)
- 21-23 Boat carrying the same animal back and forth (5)
- 22-28 Craft sounds like "All of You" in Dixieland! (4)
- 25-15 Drink the successor to Brand X! (6)
- 29-47 Ocean biggie—it'll curl your hair (6)
- 30-31 Lean and mean guy (4)
- 31-47 Storyteller turns up in bar? Quite the opposite! (4)



- 32-45 Cunning little starting gun, nameless, that is placed outside (5)
- 34-35 Profit height turned off (6)
- 39-38 Idler, but with a \$1,000 advance, his work can be seen through! (6)
- 39-46 Country singer rented a room in hotel? On the contrary! (6)
- 42-43 Lovable, downsized egghead (4)
- 44-16 Being in contention for casting, ruin gag (7)
- 48-58 Come together before "500," and turn off the drive! (4)
- 50-54 Group met on con game (5)
- 51-40 During audition, gave lesson to stiff (4)
- 53-69 They detect the sound of squashes (7)
- 55-41 Character that can get you to eat and run (6)
- 56-74 It's more problematic when crapshooter holds one (6)
- 57-67 Sail off with Ingrid from Casablanca (4)
- 59-64 Showing no sign of age, refuse dress (4)
- 62-60 Grows big cutting the top off flowers (5)
- 62-73 Part of suit involving mimic in "Mr. Bean" (5)
- 63-68 Cowboys sometimes present gal with rambling rose (8)
- 65-49 "Quiet One" is replaced by art music group (7)
- 66-52 Economy car shines after polishing (9)
- 70-72 With no energy, writes off a handy connection? (5)
- 71-61 It's worn when women's clothing gets put back on old lady (7)
- 75-56 Home is part of this from morning on, but accomplished outside (7)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed puzzle, name, address, and address to "Follow the Dots," *Happer's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. If you already subscribe to *Happer's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by May 8. Sender of the month (the correct solution) posted in random will receive one year subscription to *Happer's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the July issue. Winner of the May 8 puzzle "Dressed to the Nines—III," the Thome Kant church, Kenosha, Wisconsin, Sally L. Lippert, Penn L. Lippert, Pennsylvania, and L. Lippert, South Burlington, Vermont.



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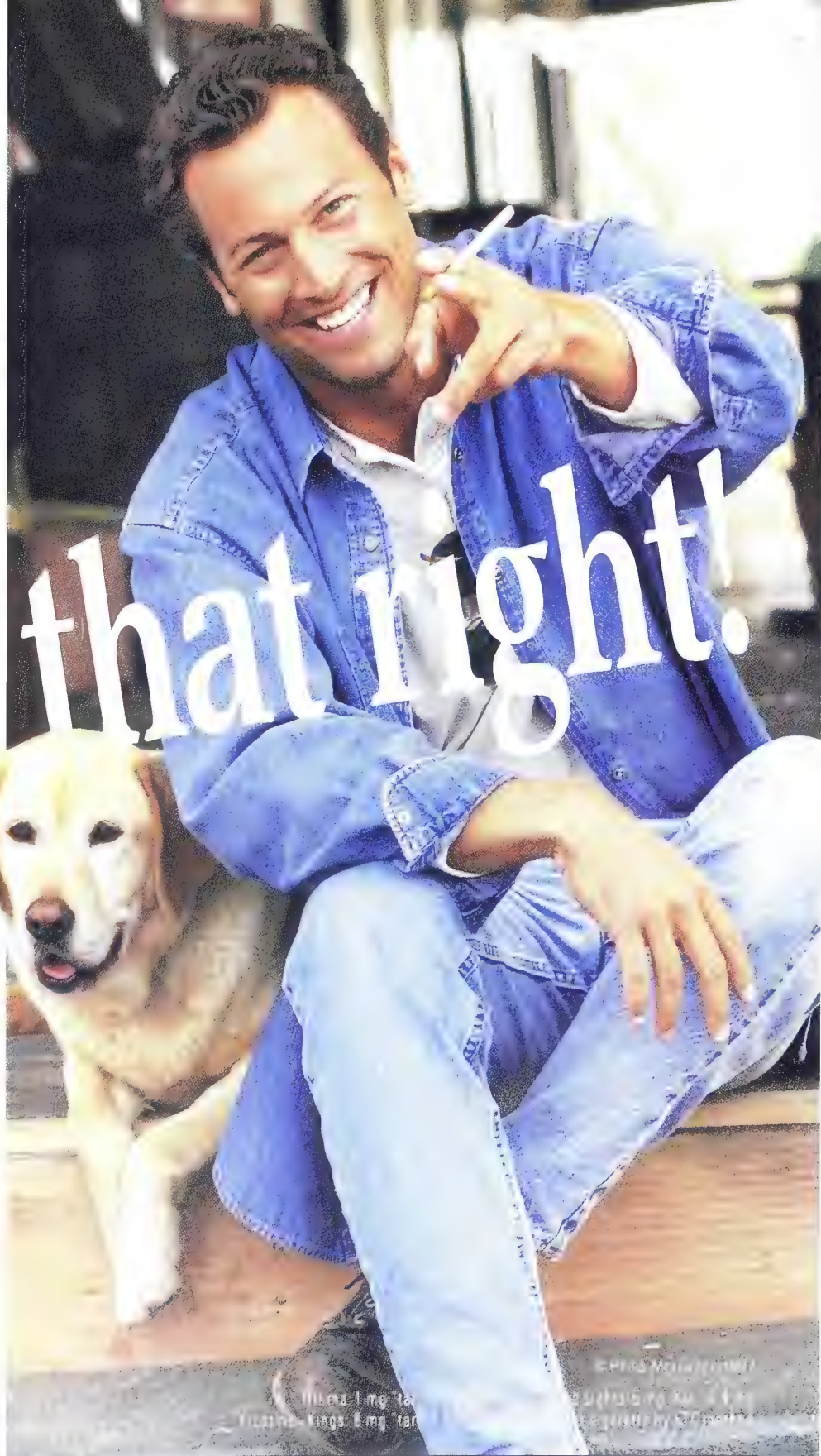
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# HARPER'S

# LETTERS

## The Library of Babble

Sallie Tisdale's article on the current state of public libraries ["Silence, Please," March] raises interesting and legitimate concerns. Unfortunately, the piece is too narrowly focused on the needs and desires of one library user—Sallie Tisdale. America's libraries have always been great equalizers, providing books and other resources that help children and adults lead better lives. Faced with a revolution in information technology, our libraries must keep pace if all Americans—and not just those who can afford computers—are to reap the benefits.

Ideally, all libraries should be well stocked with a broad range of books, computers, and other resources. Of course, there should be quiet spaces for those who seek them and plenty of knowledgeable, competent staff. But this will happen only if everyone who cares about this uniquely democratic institution demands that our tax dollars be invested in libraries.

Mary R. Somerville  
President  
American Library Association  
Chicago

I have had occasion to admire Sallie Tisdale's writing in the past, but while I sympathize in general with her appreciation for the profundities of silence, I am not convinced that a busy urban public library is the proper place to seek it. I happen to use

the same library system she does, so I find her caricature of this institution, which over the years has earned my deep gratitude and loyalty, unrecognizable. True, the central branch of the Multnomah County Library is not quite the "sacred space" that animates Tisdale's nostalgic fantasies, nor can it offer the calculated tranquillity of a Barnes & Noble. But on the whole, the library's employees are competent and courteous. The fact that people of all ages and backgrounds and circumstances actually wait outside in the cold for the library doors to open ought to be taken as a sign of real institutional vitality.

While composing this letter in relative comfort and seclusion of study, I was able to connect to our library's computer system via modem; an author search turned up four titles by Tisdale. Although five out of fifteen copies of the book I'm looking for are currently checked out, I see that there is a copy on the shelf at my tiny local branch, where so I'll find myself breathing air thick with dozens of bodies, a few of whom may exhibit bad manners, poor grooming, unpleasant odors, even toxication. Like me, they are looking for something of value: a captivating story, a fragment of useful or interesting information, or even, God forbid, some form of entertainment. This scene lacks the purity and tidiness of Tisdale's idealized memory, but why she should be discouraged by the spectacle of citizens actively engaged in the pursuit of a few humble scraps of meaning is beyond me.

Paul Wotupka  
Portland, Ore.

Harper's Magazine welcomes reader response. Please address correspondence to Letters Editor. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to editing. Authors are asked to include acknowledgment



*Harper's Magazine* did its readers a disservice by publishing Sallie Tisdale's silence, Please." The article had particular resonance for San Franciscans, whose New Main Library has been the focus of controversy since it opened in April 1996. In May of that year, Nicholson Baker gave a speech in which he suggested that as many as 200,000 books had been discarded from San Francisco's collections. After spending hundreds of hours painstakingly downloading data from the library's computer system and analyzing it on a powerful NIX workstation computer, we found that Baker was conservative in his estimate of the destruction. Our preliminary results suggest that over a million volumes are missing. San Francisco's New Main Library is not designed to hold the existing collections, let alone to expand them. Vast sums of money have been spent on new technology of dubious value. The excellent old technology of the book is being sacrificed to that end.

Jeanne Slade  
in Kirwan  
in Francisco

Sallie Tisdale's beautifully written critique of modern libraries invites both heartfelt recognition and thoughtful rebuttal. Many readers will compare their own childhood memories with the new reality and find it lacking, but Tisdale's argument is also flawed and confused.

The printed book is itself a technology, and the library of books is an adaptation to its demands. Earlier libraries—storehouses of stone tablets, papyrus scrolls, and illuminated manuscripts—were truly sacred places, because their content was so expensive to replicate. As civilization moved from chisel and quill to the printing press the library's role as a treasure-house of rare textual icons largely vanished. It was forced to adapt both to mass production and to public usage. I doubt that librarians made this adjustment out of disdain for their precious cargo of papyrus and vellum. Instead, a cultural transformation forced change upon them.

Book technology is, in turn, more expensive and precarious than Tisdale acknowledges. Vast segments of

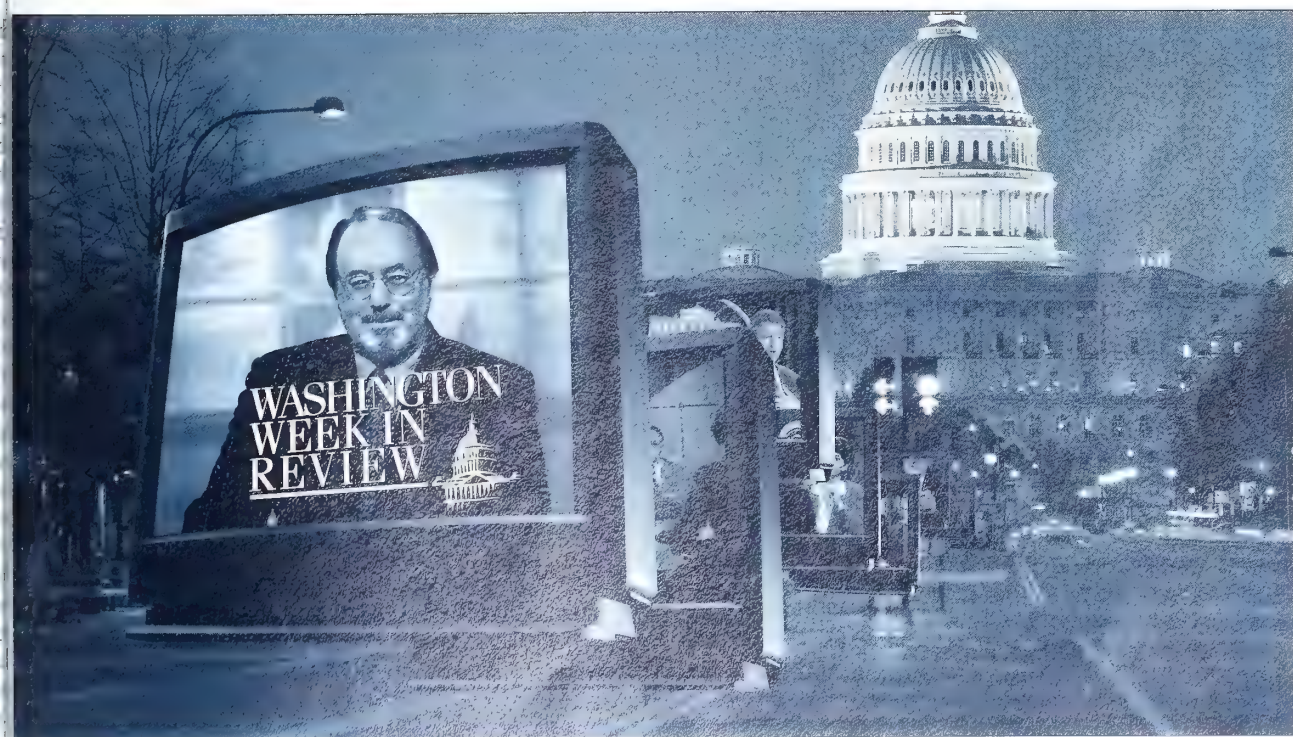
our collections are rotting more rapidly than anyone cares to admit. As we again cross over to a new technology, libraries are being forced to reassess their role. Tisdale correctly cites some examples of questionable management, but she confuses the transformation itself with the tools and strategies librarians must deploy to grapple with it.

Perhaps good architecture and design can mitigate the corrosive effects of this new technological revolution. But make no mistake: for better or worse, the revolution is upon us.

Don Beagle  
Charleston, S.C.

## Fire Fight

How amusing and sad to read David Kirp's "There Goes the Neighborhood" [March], in which he describes the social and architectural aftermath of the October 1991 firestorm that destroyed over 3,000 homes in the Berkeley and Oakland hills. It is true that there were both nice and not-so-nice people who lost

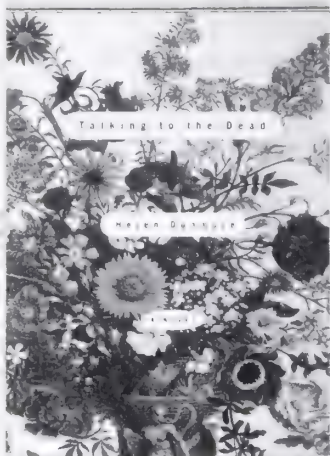


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## Talking

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—*The Times*

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—Joanna Trollope,  
author of *A Spanish Lover*

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their homes in the fire, but Kirp's insinuations about the behavior of the fire victims and his broad statements about architectural monstrosities are cruel and misleading.

As one who lived through the fire, I feel violated when our losses are trivialized. Fire victims didn't just lose "Grandma's China"; they lost Grandma as well. But aside from the deaths and injuries, the impact of losing every single shred of physical property is in fact a very Zen experience. Drifting in a sea of emotion and unconnectedness, many of us made decisions that we might have made differently under saner conditions. We were driven by the economic realities of having to pay both for a home that had burned and for temporary housing while we lived day-to-day, getting our kids back to school, going to work, "carrying on." The world did not stop for us to rebuild and restore our lives.

It is also absurd for someone from the outside to characterize the Oakland hills residents as consumeristic, me-oriented citizens. There are countless examples that prove the contrary. While fire survivors were rebuilding they also found the funds and the time to support a memorial garden and a program for establishing trained neighborhood response teams for disasters. There is more community involvement and neighborhood connection here now than ever before. In general, the hills residents are nice neighbors with a new incentive to be active, involved citizens and to ensure that nothing like the firestorm ever happens again.

Teresa Ferguson-Scott  
Berkeley, Calif.

As a longtime resident of the area destroyed in the Oakland/Berkeley firestorm, I take serious issue with David Kirp's article. It is easy, as he did, to castigate one neighborhood while overlooking the incredible costs we faced in trying to restore our lives. Although we, too, deplore the eyesores some residents have built, many of us have done our best to rebuild the kind of houses that we loved and lost. Kirp's snide, nasty article ignores the fact that the new houses are situated

in a stark, barren landscape. As the rebuilt area matures, trees will once again soften the outlines of even the ugliest houses in the fire area.

On this block, just around the corner from the streets where Kirp spent much of his time, the majority of those who have rebuilt are people who have lived here for many years. We still have keys to one another's houses; we still "look out for one another." And we are also lucky to have some wonderful new neighbors.

Marie-Anne Seabury  
Berkeley, Calif.

## A Window of My Own

I felt a bit sad while reading Michael Pollan's essay on window transparency ["A Room with Too Much View," Readings, March]. I must have been very unlucky to have lived in a glass house on the Atlantic seaboard where he gazes out his picture window and sees waves and sea grass that seemed away, static, and inaccessible. I must have been depressing. On top of all that, he had to help his father tape the big window for protection against hurricane winds. Pollan says that after many hurricane alerts, the glass wall, with its fossilized traces of yellowing tape glue, represented a fitting rebuke to the dream of a perfect transparency." That's a sad tale.

Having a window like mine makes me feel lucky. It has muntins and a vertical frame, which Pollan says invites you to move closer to it so that you can see the whole view. What even better are the bars that require me to get smack up against the pane. The muntins and bars not only protect against winds, they help protect against intruders, such as robbers and murderers. In obedience to my father, I mash my nose against the pane. I can see my whole fence and the one next to it. Looking up, I notice chimneys, bathroom and kitchen exhaust pipes, and birdhouses—all attached to roofs. My house is among hundreds of other houses. If I wanted to, I could stand in my backyard and without moving it into several others just like it. I'm very fortunate to have such a window.

Orinda J. Lewis  
Rowlett, Tex.



## ission to Burma

Experienced investors know that good investing starts with one thing: your own homework. Unfortunately, Ted Fishman ["The Joys of Global Investing," February] ignored this fundamental rule, at least with respect to the Yadana natural gas development project in Myanmar. Contrary to Fishman's implication, there have been no human-rights violations in connection with the Yadana project. The project's labor policies include minimum-age requirements, fair retirement standards, excellent wages, rigorous health and safety training, and other job benefits. The Yadana development program is already making a significant, tangible difference in the lives of the 35,000 people living in this remote and extremely poor region of the country. By the end of 1997, we will have built seven new schools, six new health clinics, and launched hundreds of self-sufficient, family-run farms. Unocal built its reputation on integrity, on a strong commitment to the people of its host countries, and on its technical and operational ex-

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*Michael W. Thacher*  
General Manager, Public Relations  
Unocal Corporation  
El Segundo, Calif.

## The Politics of Shrinkage

Michael Lerner's spirited riposte [Letters, April] to his nemesis Peter Marin ["An American Yearning," December 1996] and to the March letter by former *Tikkun* employee Chris Lehmann (whose job was eliminated through "staff shrinkage") was certainly enlightening. Faced with a shrinking circulation, Michael Lerner reached the obvious conclusion: write the letters to the editor himself, thereby raising the literary level while avoiding the messy business of having actual read-

ers who care enough to write a letter.

Even more brilliantly, Lerner advocates a constitutional amendment that would allow a "community group to obtain a corporation's charter if they are able to show that they could run the corporation solvently and better serve the common good." Let me see if I grasp this one: Some guys who can't even run a magazine are going to grab control of General Motors. Then they'll make money and do good deeds, unlike those wretched capitalists. Look out, Chris Lehmann, your numbers are about to soar.

Please pardon my haughty, dismissive cynicism—I don't know what came over me.

*David Dees*  
Auburn, Calif.

## Correction:

Lore Segal's essay "When Hope and History Don't Rhyme" [Readings, April] erroneously stated that the Twenty-third Psalm ranks hope with faith and love. The reference should have been to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13.

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# NOTEBOOK

Field trip  
By Lewis H. Lapham

...m't get thinking it's a real country because you can get a lot of high school kids in gym suits and have them spell out manas" for the newsreels.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

As presented in the theater of the news, last winter's performance in Washington of the play entitled "Our American Government" didn't come up to the minimum standards suggested by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The gym suits got slipping down around the knees of the Republican cheerleaders on Capitol Hill, and every time the Democrats lined up to spell the word "bananas" they found that one of the letters had been sold to a Chinese arms merchant or lost by Webster Hubbell. Between early January and late March, the stories from Washington were unanimous in their descriptions of futility, incompetence, and fraud. At the White House, President Clinton was confined to both a wheelchair and the pillory of scandal. Every new proof of his greed for campaign money added to the weight of accusation, which by Valentine's Day had become disabling as the wooden stocks in which the old New England Puritans caged the companions of Satan. The 105th Congress meanwhile had approached a similar state of inconsequence. The House Ethics Committee in January reprimanded Newt Gingrich, the Speaker of the House, on grounds that he was either a crook or a fool, and the Speaker's subsequent loss of stature deprived the Republican majorities in both the House and the

Senate of the *primum mobile* meant to drive their legislative agenda. Nearly a hundred days had come and gone without a decisive vote on any large item of public business—on the budget, on health care or education, on taxes or campaign-finance reform. At a loss for anything else to do, the Republicans had passed the time marking up the bills of recrimination, blaming the Democrats and one another for causing the trouble with the gym suits.

The New York reviews of the performance were uniformly bad, and over the course of the winter I encountered a good many people quick to express either mockery or disdain. As early as the first week in February a public opinion poll sponsored by Fox News confirmed the popular feeling of disgust—a clear majority of the respondents agreeing with the statement that politicians were less apt to tell the truth than prostitutes—and by the end of the month I noticed that I was making the case for the defense.

Too many people in New York fail to appreciate the purpose of the federal government, which is to promote the illusion of progress while at the same time preserving the comfort and convenience of the status quo. The substance of change brings with it the bitterness of limitation and restraint; the appearance of change requires only the staging of words—embracing the platitudes of the moment, postponing the difficult decisions until the next committee meeting or the next election, defining the passions likely to excite a dormant electorate as disruptions

that must be smoothed over, not as questions that might be answered or responsibilities that must be met.

The distinctions were never easy to explain, but they became increasingly awkward as Congress and the White House continued to explore each other's compost heaps in search of soiled money and rotten promises. By early April, I was beginning to feel the need for reassurance, and so I boarded a train to Washington on the same day that the House of Representatives returned from its Easter recess.

The day was bright blue, the cherry trees in bloom and the tulips as red as the blood of patriots. By a stroke of good fortune, I found myself climbing the stairs on the west front of the Capitol with a troop of touring Girl Scouts, and as I listened to their guide name the marble figures of the presidents standing around the perimeter of the Rotunda, I pitied the poor skeptics in New York obliged to breathe the foul air of cynicism.

The first of the day's press conferences, a joint announcement of Republican purpose and resolve by the managers of the majorities in the Senate and the House, took place in the office of the Speaker, and I was glad to see Gingrich in the center of a row of lesser politicians, seated bolt upright behind a plain wooden table, as bright-eyed and cocksure as an alert parrot. Among the more sardonic newspaper people it had been rumored that Gingrich was still hiding in closets, but during the last few weeks he had been traveling in China, and there among



the ancient scrolls he apparently had recovered his persona as "a teacher of the rules of civilization," instructing assorted Chinese officials in the meaning of liberty and the consequences of failing to meet their obligations to the cause of human rights and the principle of free trade. On the evening previous to his reappearance in Congress, Gingrich had told a crowd of cheering acolytes at the Ritz Carlton Hotel about the great esteem in which he was held in the Orient, offering as proof a story culled from the *Washington Post* (the treacherous, liberal *Washington Post*) about how it had come to pass in far-off Mongolia that an old herdsman in a canvas yurt (subsisting on "chunks of sheep fat and shots of fermented mare's milk to ward off the unspeakable cold") had chanced upon a text of Gingrich's Contract with America. The revelation roused the herdsman from his primitive torpor, and he went forth to bring democracy to the forsaken steppes once ruled by Genghis Khan. If the word of Gingrich could accomplish so much at so great a distance, think what it could accomplish in the nearby precincts of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Gingrich administered the restorative bombast (balanced budget, destruction of the I.R.S., etc.) with the verve of a latter-day Polonius or Dr. Pangloss, and although he declined to answer questions about how and when he would pay the \$300,000 fine imposed on him by the Ethics Committee, on the matters of state he was happy to say that everything was for the best in this best of all possible worlds. The reporters pressing against the conference table flapped their notebooks and shouted questions, but Gingrich dismissed them with a gesture signifying their irrelevance, and I for one was thankful for the decisiveness of his rebuke. A few of the questions might have proven rude or out of place, like gum wrappers dropped on the floor of the Rotunda.

The briefing passed without incident to Trent Lott (R., Miss.), the Senate majority leader, who supported the theme of Republican resolve with an unctuous grin assimilating both the promises of a television evangelist and the sympathies of a funeral director. His tan, like his smile, appeared to have

been applied with a brush. He was a patient man, he said, and for three months he had been waiting for President Clinton to send a budget to Congress—"a real budget, a budget that showed courage, showed leadership, that would preserve and protect Medicare, that would give some tax relief to working Americans..."

But the President had disappointed him, and so, alas, had the Democrats on Capitol Hill. Instead of sending a message of courage and leadership, they had sent a budget so extravagant in its expenditures that it was "all steak and Häagen-Dazs," not a real budget at all but a mess of partisan lies. The Republicans had given the Democrats their chance, but now they were "moving on," moving on if necessary to a budget of their own, "moving forward" to "a lot of good legislation that we can point to with pride."

So stirring were the senator's remarks that they prompted him to rise abruptly from his chair, undoubtedly in a hurry to cast a vote or write a law, and his sudden departure brought the press conference to an invigorating close before any churls hidden in the crush of reporters could ask questions likely to delay, even for an instant, the urgent tasks of renewal and reform. Nobody had the bad manners to ask about Dan Burton (R., Ind.), the congressman in charge of the committee directing the investigation of President Clinton's fund-raising methods who himself stood accused of extorting \$5,000 in cash from a lobbyist representing the great and good people of Pakistan; neither did anybody say a word about Bud Shuster (R., Pa.), the congressman in charge of the committee distributing \$200 billion in highway money, who was conducting a romance with the principal lobbyist for the interests dependent upon his committee's largesse.

**E**n route to the second news conference of the day, granted courtesy of Dick Armey, the House majority leader, who had acceded to the Republican limelight since the Speaker's January admonishment by the Ethics Committee, I congratulated one of the other reporters on the way in which the media performed a responsible public service by not

pressing too hard on our harried politicians and thus protecting the American people against the dead viruses of rage and alienation. In New York, I said, the press was often surly, failing to understand that rud questions slammed the doors of access, violated the rules of civility, offended the sensibilities of editors accustomed to walks in the White House rose garden.

Armey arrived forty-five minutes late, an affable man in an earnest suit who began by handing around a pre-release to the effect that the newly appointed poet laureate, a professor from Boston University by the name of Pinsky, had approved a policy of dispensing poetry to the general public at the nation's post offices.

On April 15 the government meant to supply copies of T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland," which Armey thought a damn fine example of bureaucratic wit—"April is the cruelest month," famous line... and April 15, you see is tax day... cruel."

After making a few announcements about the legislation likely to appear in the calendar later in the week—two urgent bills, one of them denying food stamps to the inmates of federal prisons, the other refusing funding for assisted suicide—the majority leader invited questions, and in the terrible moment when a young reporter still in her fierce twenties mentioned the name of the lobbyist dallying with Congressman Shuster in an expensive town house on the Potomac River, I felt a tremor of alarm.

"Can you tell us something please," she said, "about Ann Eppard?"

Armey, God bless him, didn't show the least change of tone or expression. As amiable as tapioca and as innocent as a sunflower, he bestowed upon the company the bewildered smile of a country boy just off the bus from a depot sixty miles west of Waco, Texas.

"I'm sorry," he said, "I don't know who that person is."

I couldn't help but admire the majority leader's candor, and I remembered, sadly, how few of the important people in New York were brave enough to admit their own ignorance.

Q: "When will the Speaker pay his time?"

A: "Ask the Speaker."



Q: "Why is the Congress repealing the Glass-Steagall Act?"

A: "The banking laws are very complex."

Q: "How does Congress intend to punish Mexico for its corrupt participation in the international drug trade?"

A: "We are very concerned about Mexico."

Q: "What about the Democrats who accuse the Speaker of malfeasance?"

A: "The pot can't call the kettle black."

Q: "When will the Republicans stop going among themselves?"

A: "Republicans are free and independent spirits. They march to their own drums."

Heartened by Arme's stolid and calm, I lingered in the halls to study the inspirational paintings—scenes of Columbus landing, the Pilgrims embarking, Cornwallis surrendering—and to wonder whether fifty years from now the guides would be pointing to the figure of Gingrich carved in Venetian marble. With any luck the schoolchildren might mistake me for Alexander Hamilton.

Flurries of tourists drifted through the halls like flocks of birds, their formations not unlike those of the Congressional Press Corps chasing the news from one whispering gallery to the next. From time to time important politicians appeared to scatter platitudes with the magnanimous aplomb of children throwing bread crumbs to the pigeons in the park. Senator Lott emerged from the Mansfield Room after a late lunch to say again that the Republicans were "moving on."

The afternoon debate in the Senate chamber consisted of three speeches about a bill directing the federal government to collect all of the country's nuclear waste and store it in the Nevada desert, at the site that already contains the remnants of the 800 nuclear weapons tests conducted by the Defense Department over the last forty-odd years. Predictably, the two Democrat-senators from Nevada (Harry Reid and Richard H. Bryan) thought the bill was wise, unnecessary, and unsafe. Arguing that the legislation served only the financial interest of the nuclear-power industry, they pointed out that it delayed the shipment of 85,000 metric tons of radioactive materials along high-

way and rail corridors in forty-three states—in canisters unable to withstand accidents occurring at speeds of more than thirty miles an hour. They might as well have been talking to the moon. As is usual in both the Senate and the House, the chamber was as bleakly vacant as an abandoned building in the South Bronx—a bored president pro tem presiding in the chair, two clerks, a stenographer, no more than forty tourists high up in the Visitor's Gallery (among them the platoon of Girl Scouts), and a single C-SPAN camera operating under remote control.

When the senators from Nevada finished saying what they had come to say, they collected their notes and shuffled quietly away. Some minutes later the sponsor of the bill, Senator Frank H. Murkowski (R., Alaska), entered through a door on the opposite side of the chamber and for the next two hours delivered an informative lecture about the glory of nuclear energy, the myopia of the Sierra Club, and the high-level radioactive-waste experiment that took place (safely and without unpleasant consequences) 1.8 million years ago in what is now the West African nation of Gabon. Inferring the experiment from a reading of the geological record, Murkowski said: "Mother nature did it, and mother nature knows a hell of a lot more about nuclear fission than the Environmental Defense Fund."

Although possessed of little eloquence and no apparent humor, the senator doggedly recited every fact at his command, always willing to appreciate why his colleagues from Nevada might look upon 85,000 metric tons of nuclear waste as an unwelcome addition to their state. "Nobody wants the stuff," he said. "I can understand that. If it were not for Nevada, I'm sure it might be Vermont, where they have a lot of marble, or it might be Montana, where they have a lot of rock. But the point is it has to go somewhere. Somebody's got to take the stuff."

So also with politics, the waste product generated by the immense energy of the country's devotion to private and selfish enterprise. Somebody's got to take the stuff, and what better place for it than among the blocks of hortatory stone, some of them surprisingly lifelike, on Capitol Hill. ■

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# HARPER'S INDEX

- Number of legal-research junkets to foreign countries made by members of Timothy McVeigh's defense team since 1995 : 9
- Number of lawyers, investigators, and technical experts involved in McVeigh's court-appointed defense : 44
- Percentage change since 1995 in federal spending on court-appointed attorneys for death-penalty cases : +68
- Ratio of legal fees paid by Newt Gingrich's reelection campaign last year to the amount it spent on TV and radio ads : 5:4
- Percentage of Americans who believe they are more likely to see Elvis Presley than campaign-finance reform : 48
- Portion of the combined funds in the Senate's five largest campaign chests that belongs to Alfonse D'Amato : 1/2
- Fine levied last October against a Dole campaign-finance official convicted of laundering contributions : \$6,000,000
- Price Richard Nixon's family proposes the U.S. government pay to release remaining Watergate documents : \$26,000,000
- "Symbolic portion" of Gene Roddenberry and Timothy Leary shot into orbit last April, in ounces of ashes apiece : 0.25
- Quarts of Starbucks Java Chip ice cream found in the freezer of the Heaven's Gate compound last March 27 : 7
- Rank of Salt Lake City in per capita Jell-O consumption : 1
- Combined number of root canals performed last year on two Kodiak bears at the San Francisco Zoo : 7
- Portion of Tanzania's lion population lost to canine distemper since 1994 : 1/3
- Number of feet the Dead Sea has fallen since 1950 : 56
- Number of months ago that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu began a "self-study" course in Arabic : 4
- Chance that a Palestinian approves of suicide bombings : 1 in 3
- Percentage of annual weapons exports that are sold by the five countries on the U.N. Security Council : 85
- Estimated percentage of all goods and services produced worldwide last year that came from Asia : 22
- Percentage in 1900 : 29
- Portion of California's revenue between 1852 and 1870 that came from taxes paid by Chinese laborers : 1/2
- Number of Americans employed domestically by U.S. subsidiaries of foreign corporations : 4,900,000
- Ratio of German autoworkers to German environmental workers : 5:6
- Number of years since 1950 in which the U.S. Forest Service timber program has not operated at a loss : 3 (see page 37)
- Percentage increase since 1992 in the amount of overtime wages paid the White House domestic staff : +38
- Hourly fee paid the "ethics adviser" employed by Kenneth Starr during his first 19 months as Special Prosecutor : \$400
- Number of times the directorship of the CIA has changed hands since 1990 : 7
- Number of Russia's 97 army divisions that are combat-ready, according to security chief Alexander Lebed : 8
- Number of Mexico's federal law-enforcement agents fired last year for violating "ethical standards" : 1,200
- Number of Latin American countries in which a rapist is exonerated if the victim accepts his marriage proposal : 14
- Chance that a Florida rape victim's account will be believed by hospital medical personnel : 1 in 2
- Percentage of Planned Parenthood donors in 1994 who also donated to Operation Rescue that year : 17
- Number of bills proposing HMO regulations introduced in state legislatures last year : 1,100
- Number introduced so far this year : 800
- Chances that a U.S. doctor specializing in pain has under-medicated patients for fear of losing his or her license : 2 in 5
- Number of years the head of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America served as CEO of a pharmaceutical firm : 12
- Number of years the editor of *Divorce Magazine* spent working at *Wedding Bells* magazine : 3
- Chance that a romance cited by *People* magazine last year as among the century's "greatest love stories" was adulterous : 1 in 2
- Chance that a U.S. teenage girl will be pregnant within one month of becoming sexually active : 1 in 5
- Percentage of Americans who say they would not enjoy spending time with their own clone : 70
- Weeks after giving birth last February that Michael Jackson's wife returned to work as his plastic surgeon's assistant : 6

*Figures cited have been adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of April 1997. Sources are listed on page 75.*

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# READINGS

[Essay]

## THE DEEP ROOTS OF HEAVEN'S GATE

From "That Old Time Religion," by Chris Lehmann, in the March 31 issue of *Feed*, an online magazine. Lehmann is an editor at *Newsday*, the Long Island, New York, newspaper.

**T**o the American media, the story of the Heaven's Gate cult was great sport. Reporters and commentators dwelt obsessively on the exotic sci-fi trappings of the cult and its now-infamous Web site. They noted in lurid, breathless detail the bizarre practices of the faithful—their purple face-dressings, their surgical castrations, their neo-Maoist uniforms and haircuts—while making only passing reference to the sect's "gnostic" or "neo-gnostic" doctrine. And, of course, eager to shoehorn Heaven's Gate into the received template of crazed-cult stories, reporters made much of leader Marshall Applewhite's "messianic" charisma, his reported breakdowns, and his homosexual affairs: surely there must be a megalomaniac at the center of all this, bullying and exhorting his lost, co-dependent flock over the cosmic cliff.

All of this makes for diverting copy, to be sure, but does little to explain the otherworldly beliefs of Heaven's Gate. And even on its own terms, the psycho-cult explanation is barely coherent: reporters were compelled to note, almost grudgingly, that cult members died "willingly"—indeed with a certain quiescent

joy—and that Applewhite let his followers mingle rather freely with the world at large, even giving lapsed believers bus fare home or driving them to the airport when they lost their faith. Applewhite was no doubt a kook, but he was hardly a New Age Jim Jones.

Bizarre as it may appear, the behavior of Heaven's Gate comes out of a consistent, intelligible religious tradition that dates back to late antiquity. This tradition, gnosticism, is far from a backwater fringe movement in American culture and spirituality. Gnosticism takes up entire sections in New Age bookstores; it also suffuses mainstream self-help and spirituality literature. In recent years, major publishing houses have issued handsomely packaged translations of gnostic scripture and, in one case, even a collection of meditations called *A Gnostic Book of Hours*. Among gnosticism's more celebrated adherents are novelist Lawrence Durrell and psychologist Carl Jung, whose loopy gnostic outlook has, in turn, inspired many a spiritual-cum-psychological best-selling author, from James Hillman to Elaine Pagels to Thomas Moore to Bill Moyers. Just last year, renowned literary critic Harold Bloom published *Omens of Millennium: The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams, and Resurrection*, which is half a gnostic spiritual autobiography and half an interpretation of gnostic themes in contemporary American culture. Even Stephen King's current hit horror novels, *Desperation* and *The Regulators*, are steeped in gnostic themes and terminology.

**W**hat exactly, then, is gnosticism? It is, first and foremost, a fiercely world-denying



truth. The original gnostics, who reached their peak of influence in the first and second centuries, held that the creation of our world was a colossal, cosmic mistake—the handiwork of a pseudo-deity called Ialdabaoth, a deceitful, if clumsy, demiurge. The true God had retreated far beyond the reach of the created universe—which, in gnostic mythology, is commonly described as an “abortion”—and into a realm of unconditioned repose and nonbeing known as the Pleroma. Believers could gain access to this rarefied state only through the arcane lore of gnosis, or knowl-

edge. Gnosis taught, among other things, that the body, sexuality, and all institutions of the human social order were affronts to the higher soul of the gnostic elite—so much metaphysical deadwood that the heroic, solitary believer had to clear away in order to find his or her salvation.

This singularly bleak cosmology had no room for politics and history: the individual’s salvation and rapid, fastidious retreat from the world were its sole aim, and gnostics saw themselves, quite unapologetically, as a tiny, elect spiritual aristocracy. The rest of the world, quite literally, could be damned.

Even this crudely oversimplified account of gnostic doctrine suggests a striking correspondence with the teachings of Heaven’s Gate. Applewhite’s followers scornfully referred to their bodies as “containers” and “vehicles,” and likened their pending mass suicide to something as humdrum as junking an old car. Pages from the cult’s Web site, apparently written by Applewhite, refer with similar scorn to “human-mammalian indulgences” and deride the conventions of “mammalian civilization.” They go on to offer a full-blown cosmology to account for those misleading institutions—particularly established religions—that have kept human “plants,” or potential souls, in a state of bondage. This account, which blames a ruling caste of space aliens known as “Luciferians” for our entrapment, corresponds to the gnostic myth of spiritual ascension. Gnostics believed that a class of corrupted angels were key spiritual obstacles in the soul’s harrowing journey toward the Pleroma. In Applewhite’s reveries, Luciferians serve the same purpose; these “fallen angels” create a society of false religions and general misinformation that must be overcome by those who wish to “enter the ‘Next World.’”

What has made gnosticism spring up in both Stephen King novels and Rancho Santa Fe? Harold Bloom argues that gnosticism is the “American religion.” He suggests that gnosticism’s studied, measured retreat from worldly matters and its adoration of the individual soul can be seen in the works of such an American titans of the spirit as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Mormon founder Joseph Smith.

But America’s present gnostic renaissance lacks the social reformist impulses that informed the faith of both Emerson and Smith. In fact, America’s romance with the gnostic coincides with a culture-wide posture of civic disengagement. One can indeed invert the media’s interpretation of Heaven’s Gate: instead of asking why these UFO nuts committed suicide en masse, consider how adherents of such an alien-

[Telephone Message]

## INHUMAN SERVICES

*From the transcript of a message left in March on the answering machine of Mara Anna Young, an Orange County, California, resident who was contesting the termination of her food stamps by the county’s Department of Social Services. The transcript was released by the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, which is suing Orange County on behalf of Young.*

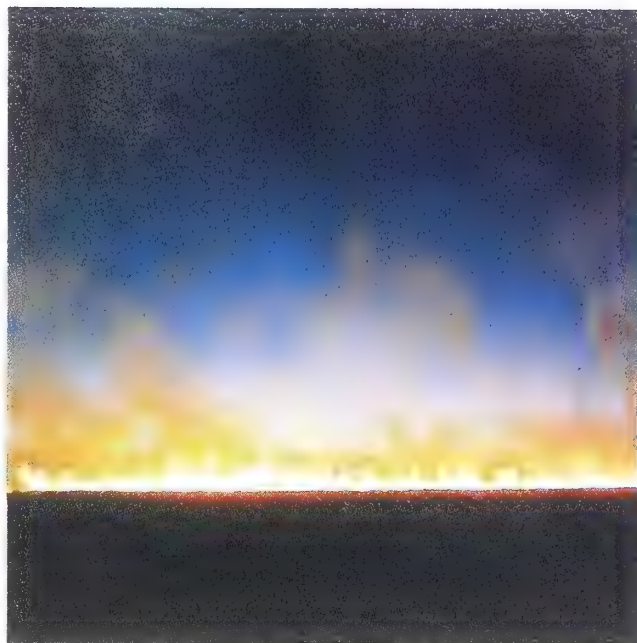
Yes, Mara Anna Young, this call is for you. This is the Department of Social Services Health and Welfare Agency, and we’re in receipt of your letter saying that we have committed blatant fabrication and malfeasance.

Miss Young, you’re so full of shit. Why don’t you get off your fat, lazy ass and get a job. You know, taxpayers like me really resent the shit out of you. What makes you so special that you don’t have to get up and go to work? You just work the system and take and take and take. Why don’t you get a life, get a job, and quit taking from people who do have lives and jobs. You sound plenty healthy. If you’ve got a disability, go to Goodwill. But quit trying to take our money.

You are not special; you are a piece of shit. That’s what the Department of Social Services Health and Welfare Agency thinks of you. So get off your fat, lazy ass, you bitch, because we’re sick of you.

And guess what? You have already lost your case. We just want to let you know what we think of you. We think you’re garbage. Everybody thinks you’re garbage. Go somewhere else and leech, you bitch.





These photographs of midwestern prairie fires were taken by Larry Schwarm and are currently on display at the Morgan Gallery in Kansas City, Missouri. Schwarm lives in Emporia, Kansas.

seeming faith are so prototypically American. Cult members were avid fans of *The X-Files* and *Star Wars*; they dressed for their suicides with *Star Trek* "Away Team" badges affixed to their arms. Consider, moreover, how these pop-culture phenomena resonate with gnostic myths of spiritual ascension. *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, and *The X-Files* all hinge on the primal drama of seekers after knowledge pitted against an indifferent, and often hostile, cosmos. George Lucas has steeped his *Star Wars* trilogy in the work of myth scholar Joseph Campbell, yet another connoisseur of gnosticism.

Gnosticism can be seen as the abiding faith of the hermetically isolated consumer, whose idea of civic participation is, at best, hooking into such pseudo-communities as talk radio, daytime tabloid TV, and the Internet. Thus disengaged, amid ever shriller prophecies of millennial doom, some must find it quite alluring—even emotionally satisfying—to think of our common world, and perhaps even our own bodies, as an unreal, easily disposable apparition. This world of faith and fantasy is also, more mundanely, the world we increasingly accept in lieu of dedicating ourselves to infinitely homelier notions such as justice, equality, and the dignity of labor. But by pretending that the victims of Heaven's Gate were half-alien freaks, we conveniently sidestep our own privileged retreats from the world. In fact, their collective delusion reflects on us all.

[Interrogation]

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

*From a script used last winter by the Democratic National Committee to investigate the sources of certain contributions it received during the presidential campaign. The audit was prompted by the controversy surrounding solicitations of foreign investors by former DNC official John Huang. DNC workers used the script to make telephone calls to donors who fit specific profiles, including those who contributed to the April 1996 fund-raiser at the Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple in Hacienda Heights, California, and those who made large contributions "in connection with any DNC fund-raising targeting the Asian Pacific American community."*

### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- The interviewer should know as much about the person he or she is calling as possible. The interviewer should know whether the number is an office, home, message center, or some other location. A full database report on the individual should be provided to the interviewer.
- When possible, the interviewer should be female. Female callers are less threatening and often are more successful at getting respondents to cooperate.



- Anticipate that the person answering may not speak English. Have a plan for either translation or some other method to deal with this possibility.
- Anticipate that, given the public attention to this matter, the person you are talking to is recording the conversation.
- Use short, compelling questions when possible: "Is this money yours?" The interviewer should not deviate from the set script. The interviewer should (courteously) avoid chitchat or responding to provocative statements.

#### PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

We recommend that the interviewer not identify him or herself at the outset of the conversation. Possibly utilize the following order, if the person sought is "Robert Jones":

If a male voice answers, ask: "Mr. Jones?"

If a female voice answers, or a male voice answers in the negative: "May I please speak with Mr. Jones?"

Answer: "He's not home."

"Where can I reach him?"

Answer: "He's at the office."

[Rebuke]

## CAMPAIGN SPENDING: AN UNWRITTEN RULE

*From a letter sent last September by Andy Kober, the editor of the Harris County Herald in Pine Mountain, Georgia, to the campaign staff of Jim Chafin, a Democrat who was running against Representative Michael "Mac" Collins (R., Ga.). Chafin lost the election.*

I hereby respectfully request that the Jim Chafin for Congress committee send no further faxes [announcing campaign news] to this office. The committee chose not to advertise the campaign in this newspaper and has given no indication of wanting to advertise the campaign in this newspaper. Hence, neither the committee nor the candidate should expect or anticipate any free publicity.

Incumbent Republican Mac Collins has advertised in this newspaper on a number of different occasions. When Congressman Collins sends me a fax, this fax gets read and frequently published.

"Do you have that number?"

The point is to *avoid* revealing the organization or the purpose of the call until the interviewer is talking to the person he or she is seeking. Otherwise, the person being sought has too much opportunity to rebuff the question without actually talking to the interviewer.

If the interviewer must leave a number at an office or with a family member, try to obtain the name of the person who is taking the message and make the message compelling. We suggest something like: "Please call the Democratic National Committee to confirm your contribution."

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Once the interviewer is in touch with the named party or a representative who says he or she can answer the questions, then the interviewer should proceed as follows:

Mr./Mrs./Ms. [name], I am calling on behalf of the Democratic National Committee. According to the records of the Democratic National Committee, you made a political contribution to the Democratic National Committee on [date]. We need to ask you for information about this contribution so that the Democratic National Committee can determine whether it should keep this contribution or return it. Please understand that if we do not get enough confirming information, the Democratic National Committee may have no choice but to return the money to you and report this fact to the Federal Election Commission.

1. Would you please confirm the spelling of your name for me?
2. Do you remember making a political contribution to the Democratic National Committee on [date]?
3. How much did you give to the Democratic National Committee on [date]?
4. Do you have a record of this, such as a canceled check or bank statement?
5. Are you a United States citizen?
6. [If the answer to No. 5 is "yes"] Were you a United States citizen when you gave this contribution to the Democratic National Committee?
7. [If the answer to No. 6 is "no"] Are you a permanent resident of the United States?
8. [If the answer to No. 7 is "yes"] Were you a permanent resident of the United States at the time you gave this money to the Democratic National Committee?
9. [If the answer to No. 8 is "yes"] At the time you gave this money, did you have a



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DAYTIME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

### CHECK DESIRED PROGRAM(S)

- |                                   |   |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> SPANISH  | <input type="checkbox"/> MANDARIN CHINESE | <input type="checkbox"/> PORTUGUESE                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FRENCH   | <input type="checkbox"/> RUSSIAN          | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGLISH FOR SPANISH SPEAKERS  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GERMAN   | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERN HEBREW    | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGLISH FOR JAPANESE SPEAKERS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ITALIAN  | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERN GREEK     |  |
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"green card" as a permanent resident alien in the United States?

10. [If the answer to No. 9 is "no"] Apart from your contribution of [\$ amount] on [date], did you or any other member of your family make any other contributions to the Democratic National Committee?

11. [If the answer to No. 10 is "yes"] Ask for name, date, amount, identity, and address of each person making the contribution and whether he or she was a U.S. citizen or green-card holder at the time.

*Was this the donor's money?*

12. We also need to confirm that your contribution was properly recorded. Would you please confirm that the contribution of [\$ amount] you made on [date] was your money and did not come from some other source?

13. Your contribution of [\$ amount], therefore, did not come from someone else, correct?

*If someone else's money.*

14. We need to know whose money this was,

if it was not yours, so it can be properly accounted for. Would you please tell me whose money it was that was given to the Democratic National Committee?

15. What is his/her address and telephone number?

16. Do you know of anyone else who could help us locate [name of actual donor]?

17. Do you know if [name] is a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident?

18. Can you tell me how you happen to be listed in the records as having given this money, when it was [name] who actually gave it?

19. Do you know who from the Democratic National Committee asked or solicited [name] to make this contribution?

20. Is there anyone else who might help us learn more about this contribution? Where can we find him/her?

*Suitability:*

21. Because you have indicated that you gave this money, one of the things the Democratic National Committee needs to know is whether a person's contribution is appropriate, given his or her own available financial resources. You gave [\$ amount]. Is this an amount that you feel comfortable having given?

22. What is your annual earned income?

23. Where do you work and what is the telephone number there?

24. Who is your employer/supervisor?

25. Do you have any other sources of income or major assets that were used to fund your contribution to the Democratic National Committee?

26. Can you tell me how much these amount to and anything else about them?

27. Would you authorize us to obtain a credit report to verify the information you have given us?

28. [If the answer to No. 27 is "yes"] Where can I send or fax you an authorization form?

29. In summary, would you please confirm for me that your contribution of [\$ amount] on [date] was your money?

30. Is there anything else that you have not told me that you think I should know about this contribution?

31. Thank you again for your time and cooperation.

[Directive]

## SAVE THE SILVER!

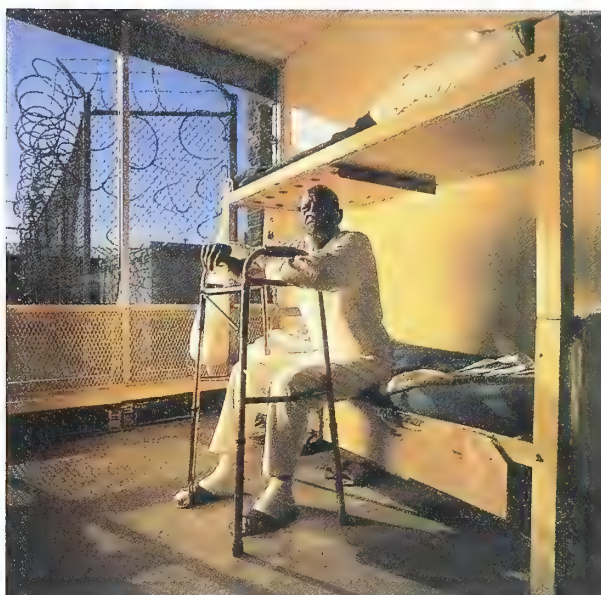
*From a "priority" cable sent on March 13 by the State Department to the United States Embassy in Tirana, Albania. Earlier that day, following unrest in Albania, Marines had begun an official evacuation of Americans. The cable appeared in Al Kamen's column in the March 19 Washington Post.*

POST IS ADVISED OF [STATE DEPARTMENT] POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING OF STERLING SILVER FLATWARE ON THE OCCASION OF AN EVACUATION:

"POSTS IN DEPARTURE STATUS SHOULD CONSIDER SAFEGUARDING STERLING SILVER FLATWARE AT THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCE IN QUESTION OR IN THE CHANCERY, WHICHEVER POST CONSIDERS SAFER. IN THE EVENT OF AN EMBASSY CLOSING, POST SHOULD CONSIDER SHIPPING FLATWARE OUT WITH THE HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS OF THE AMBASSADOR AND/OR D.C.M. [DEPUTY] UPON THEIR DEPARTURE FROM POSTS, FOR DELIVERY TO [STATE] UPON THEIR ARRIVAL IN WASHINGTON, D.C."

POST IS ENCOURAGED TO TAKE WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY TO SAFEGUARD THE STERLING.





From a series of photographs of older prisoners by Montreal artist Ron Levine taken at the Hamilton Aged and Infirm Center in Hamilton, Alabama. At left is John Wilson, seventy-two, imprisoned in 1988 for assault with a deadly weapon. At right is William Howard "Tex" Johnson, sixty, imprisoned in 1959 for robbery at a Martin Luther King Jr. march; he later escaped and was caught and reincarcerated. The series will be published next year by Origami Publications in Montreal.

[Tips]

## JURY RIGGING LAID BARE

*From the transcript of remarks by Jack McMahon, who is running for district attorney in Philadelphia, in a training videotape he made for the city's prosecutors while he was an assistant district attorney. The tape was released in March by Lynne Abraham, the current district attorney and McMahon's opponent in the upcoming election. McMahon made the video in 1987; a year earlier, the Supreme Court had ruled that lawyers could not eliminate potential jurors because of their race.*

Case law says the object of jury selection is to get a competent, fair, and impartial jury. Well, that's ridiculous. You're there to win. The only way you're going to do your best is to get jurors who are unfair and more likely to convict than anybody else in that room. If you go in there, any one of you, and think you are going to be some noble civil libertarian, you'll lose. You'll be out of office.

In my experience, you look at how people are dressed. If you take middle-class people who are well-dressed, you're going to do well. Another thing I've learned: most people bring a book to court. Look at this book. If a juror is reading Karl Marx, you don't want that person.

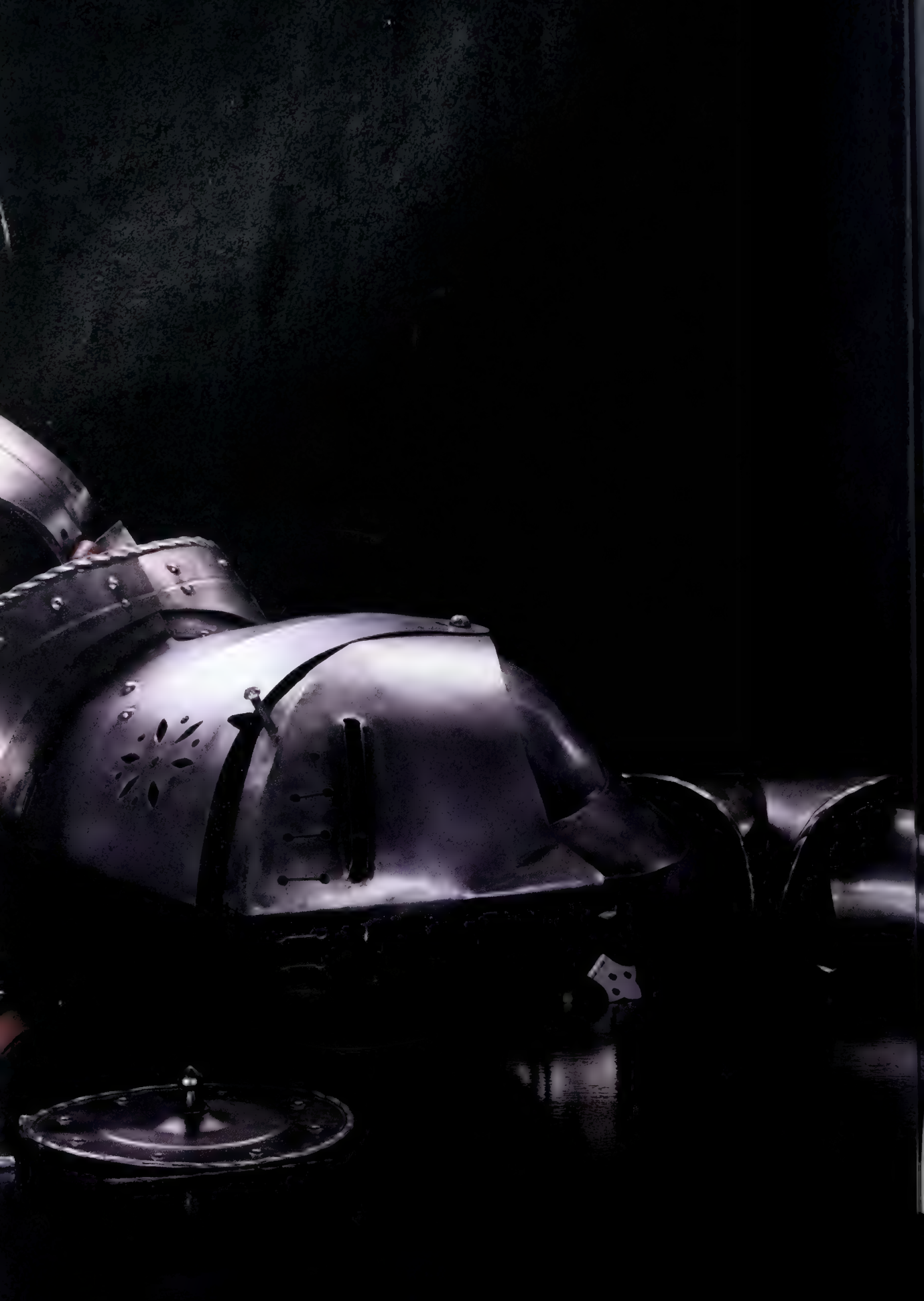
You don't want smart people, because smart people will analyze the hell out of your case. They hold you and the courts up to higher standards. They take those words "reasonable doubt" and they actually try to think about them. You don't want these people. You don't want people who are going to think it out.

Let's face it, the blacks from low-income areas are less likely to convict. There's a resentment toward law enforcement. There's a resentment toward authority. You don't want those people on your jury. It may appear as if you're being racist, but you're just being realistic.

In selecting blacks, you don't want real educated ones. This goes across the board. All races. If you're going to take blacks, you want older black men and women, particularly men. Older black men are very good. Guys seventy, seventy-five years old are from a different era; they have a different respect for the law. Older black women, on the other hand—when you have a black defendant who is a young boy and they can identify, a motherly type of thing—are a little different. The men don't have that same kind of maternal instinct.

Blacks from the South are excellent. Ask where they are from. If they say, I've lived in Philadelphia five years, if they are from South Carolina and places like that, I tell you, I don't think you can ever lose with a jury of blacks from South Carolina. They are dynamite. They just have a different philosophy down there.









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THOSE WHO APPRECIATE QUALITY ENJOY IT RESPONSIBLY.



[Titles]

## BOOK ENDS

*From a list of book titles currently in print that begin with "The End of," in History: The End of the World, a collection of readings edited by Lewis H. Lapham, published last month by the History Book Club.*

*The End of Acting*, by Richard Hornby  
*The End of Affluence*, by Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich

*The End of Architecture?* edited by Peter Noever  
*The End of Art Theory: Criticism & Postmodernity*, by Victor Burgin

*The End of Beauty*, by Jorie Graham  
*The End of Central Planning?* edited by David Kemme and Claire Gordon

*The End of Economics?* by Cristovam Buarque

*The End of Education*, by William Spanos

*The End of Evil*, by Marjorie Suchocki

*The End of Fame*, by B. Adams and C. Brooks

*The End of History and the Last Man*, by Francis Fukuyama

*The End of Mandatory Retirement*, by James Walker and Harriet Lazer

*The End of Manhood: A Book for Men of Conscience*, by John Stoltenberg

*The End of Marriage: Why Monogamy Isn't Working*, by Julian Hafner

*The End of Nature*, by Bill McKibben

*The End of Our Time*, by A. J. Sosebee

*The End of Patriarchy*, by Claudio Naranjo

*The End of Physics*, by David Lindley

*The End of Racism*, by Dinesh D'Souza

*The End of Reform*, by Alan Brinkley

*The End of Science?* edited by Richard Elvee

*The End of the Beatles?* by Harry Castleman and Walter Podrazik

*The End of the Cold War*, edited by David Armstrong and Erik Goldstein

*The End of the Communist Power Monopoly*, by Michael Waller

*The End of the Future*, by Jean Gimpel

*The End of the House of Windsor*, by Stephen Haseler

*The End of the Nation State*, by Jean-Marie Guehenno

*The End of the Novel*, by Michael Kruger

*The End of the Third World*, by Guy Arnold

*The End of the World: A History*, by Otto Friedrich

*The End of the World: A Love Story*, by Edward Eddleston

They are law and order. They are on the cops' side. Those people are good.

Young black women are very bad. There's an antagonism. I guess maybe because they're downtrodden in two respects: they are women, and they're black. So they want to take it out on somebody, and you don't want it to be you.

You don't want social workers. That's obvious. They got intelligence, sensitivity, all this stuff. You don't want them. Teachers are bad, especially young teachers, teachers who teach grade school. Though sometimes I've had good luck with teachers who teach in the public school system. They may be so fed up with the garbage in their school that they may say, "I know this kind of kid. He's a pain in the ass." If you get a white teacher teaching in a black school who's sick of these guys, that may be one you accept.

[Court Transcript]

## A LAWYER WITHOUT PRECEDENT

*From the transcript of a habeas corpus hearing held in January 1996 at the Butts County Superior Court in Jackson, Georgia, to determine whether Wallace Fugate was given "effective assistance of counsel" by Leo Browne during the 1992 murder trial in which Fugate was sentenced to death. At the hearing, Browne, who had been appointed by a county court to represent Fugate, was questioned by Stephen B. Bright, a lawyer for the Southern Center for Human Rights. The judge ruled against Fugate; the decision has been appealed to the Georgia Supreme Court.*

STEPHEN B. BRIGHT: Do you know what the case of *Gregg v. Georgia* [the 1976 Supreme Court ruling that allowed states to impose the death penalty] is?

LEO BROWNE: No, I don't—I don't know what you're getting at there, no.

BRIGHT: You—you're not familiar with that case?

BROWNE: No.

BRIGHT: All right. So you don't—you don't follow the Supreme Court cases?

BROWNE: Not too closely.

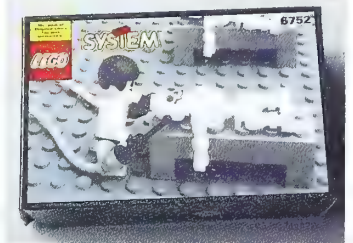
BRIGHT: All right. You don't know what—

BROWNE: The past few years I haven't.

BRIGHT: All right. I'm just asking you if when we say "post-*Gregg* case," do you know what *Gregg* means?

BROWNE: You mean about the—the death penalty?





From a series of LEGO sets designed by Polish artist Zbigniew Libera. Each box contains the blocks necessary to build the figures and structures on its lid. When Libera requested the LEGOs from the company's Warsaw representative, he planned to create sets for a prison and a hospital, but the project evolved into a concentration camp. According to a press release issued by the LEGO Group, "If the artist had described his ultimate project to us in advance, he naturally would not have received a single LEGO element from us!" The sets were on display in March at the Galleri Fairschou in Copenhagen.

BRIGHT: Well, I'm just asking you if that time frame means anything to you?

BROWNE: Not exactly, no.

BRIGHT: Now, are you familiar with the case of *Furman v. Georgia*?

BROWNE: No.

BRIGHT: Have you ever read that case?

BROWNE: I don't think I have.

BRIGHT: You familiar at all with the case of *Godfrey v. Georgia*?

BROWNE: No.

BRIGHT: Ever read any of the opinions with regard to death-penalty cases out of the Federal District Courts in Georgia?

BROWNE: I might have, but I don't—I don't recall specifically.

BRIGHT: And between the time of the Harrell case [a capital case Browne worked on in 1979] and Mr. Fugate's case, you had not been involved in any death-penalty case?

BROWNE: That's correct.

BRIGHT: No death-penalty case?

BROWNE: No.

BRIGHT: Been involved in any murder cases?

BROWNE: No. Not in that length of time.

BRIGHT: Have you ever had a case where you had an expert witness?

BROWNE: You mean for the defendant?

BRIGHT: Yes, sir.

BROWNE: I really don't recall. I had one case I may have had a doctor come in and testify.

But I—I can't recall specifically.

BRIGHT: Do you remember what year that was?

BROWNE: No, good God.

BRIGHT: What case?

BROWNE: Lost back there somewhere.

BRIGHT: What subject?

BROWNE: In the Sixties or Seventies or somewhere in there.

BRIGHT: Ever had an investigator?

BROWNE: Do what?

BRIGHT: Investigator? Ever have an investigator?

BROWNE: Oh, investigator?

BRIGHT: Yeah.

BROWNE: No. No.

BRIGHT: Do you feel like an investigator would have been of benefit to you in the defense in this case?

BROWNE: I think we discussed that at one time and decided that we really wouldn't need an investigator.

BRIGHT: Do you have any idea what you would use an investigator for if you had one?

BROWNE: I'm sure I—I'm sure I have been ex-





*Armada Invincible*, by Lee N. Smith III. His work will be on display in September at the Lyons Matrix Galleries in Austin, Texas. Smith lives in Dallas.

posed to some of that, but I don't remember specifically.

BRIGHT: Could you just tell me, Mr. Browne, can you tell me what criminal-law decisions from any court you're familiar with? Georgia Supreme Court—

BROWNE: Well, off the top of my head I can't tell you any cases I'm familiar with. I've—from time to time I've had to refer to cases, go research cases. But I can't sit here and tell you what cases I'm actually familiar with. Can't do it.

BRIGHT: Not even one?

BROWNE: None. Not even one.

BRIGHT: All right. Thank you. Nothing further, Your Honor.

JUDGE JOHN R. HARVEY: All right. Thank you, Mr. Browne.

BROWNE: I can go find you some, if you need 'em.

JUDGE HARVEY: Okay. Mr. Browne, just one last question. Do you recall how much you were, in fact, paid by the county to represent Mr. Fugate?

BROWNE: I don't recall that either.

[Wish]

## LONG LIVE THE DESPOTS

*From "Let Us Hope that Deng's Death Will Mean a New Dawn for Despotism in that Vast Country," by Peregrine Worsthorne, in the March 1 issue of the London Spectator.*

Hopes that China might now travel down the path of freedom seem to me not only idle—because they have no chance of being fulfilled—but also undesirable, because it would be hell on earth if they were fulfilled. It is bad enough to have 250 million or so Americans all claiming the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, each doing his own thing and letting it all hang out, each creating his own ethical code and religion, without also adding to that already dangerously large hodgepodge of individualism 1.2 billion more Chi-



nese doing the same. One human rights-obsessed superpower determined to transform mankind in its image is quite enough.

Ideally, the United States needs to be balanced by another superpower upholding different ideas of human advance, based not so much on rights as on duties, believing not so much in the importance of freedom as in the even greater importance of order. For order has just as much to contribute to civilization as freedom. Sadly, that truth has been rendered incredible in the twentieth century by two countries, Germany and Russia, whose barbarous tyrannies brought it into disrepute. China to date has done no better. But what a blessing it would be if in the twenty-first century China emerged as a civilized despotism, thereby making the potential of order credible again. Surely that should be our hope, not that China renounces totalitarianism and embraces democracy but that she transforms totalitarianism, under the shadow of which civilization withers, into authoritarianism, under which, as often as not, it prospers mightily.

China's rulers ought to look for guidance in the philosophy of their country's own Confucius, whose conservative teachings did so much to civilize the old imperial autocracy, not by challenging it but by inculcating in its officials a gentlemanly code of conduct. A civilized polity, Confucius taught, depends less on the quality of the autocrat who gives the orders than on the quality of those charged with responsibility for carrying them out. First take care of the imperial civil servants (i.e., mandarins) and the emperor will take care of himself. That was the central tenet of the Confucian creed: autocracy tempered by a politics of good manners and honorable behavior.

This would not be a bad way forward for China today. The post-Marxist Communist Party paramount chief would remain in charge in Beijing—as the emperor had before him—but the regional Communist officials would slowly but surely start adapting his centralized commands to local conditions, to the state of public opinion on the spot, as the imperial officials used to do in the old days. Traveling in rural China eighteen months ago, I was struck by the extent to which this is already happening. Whereas on an earlier visit, just after the Cultural Revolution, Communist officials had treated the peasants with lordly disdain, and been treated in return with cowering deference, this time their relationship was incomparably more egalitarian. Driving through a market town, for example, our official car knocked over a vegetable stall. But instead of driving on—as would have happened on my previous visit—the Communist officials got out and

helped to clear up the mess with their own hands. And at the subsequent lunch there seemed to be a genuine discussion between officials and peasants, unlike the stilted exchanges on the earlier trip. No chance, certainly, of the party commissars transforming themselves into elected representatives of the people. But a real chance, at least in my mind, of them transforming themselves into civilized mandarins, which may well suit China better.

[Grievance]

## COPYRIGHT PIRACY, CIRCA 1872

*From a letter to the editor by Mark Twain in the September 21, 1872, issue of the London Spectator. The letter appears in Mark Twain's Letters, Volume 5: 1872–1873, to be published this month by the University of California Press.*

Sir,

I only venture to intrude upon you because I come, in some sense, in the interest of public morality, and this makes my mission respectable. Mr. John Camden Hotten, of London, has, of his own individual motion, republished several of my books in England. I do not protest against this, for there is no law that could give effect to the protest; and, besides, publishers are not accountable to the laws of heaven or earth in any country, as I understand it. But my little grievance is this: my books are bad enough just as they are written; then what must they be after Mr. John Camden Hotten has composed half a dozen chapters and added the same to them? I feel that all true hearts will bleed for an author whose volumes have fallen under such a dispensation as this.

If a friend of yours, or if even you yourself, were to write a book and set it adrift among the people, with the gravest apprehensions that it was not up to what it ought to be intellectually, how would you like to have John Camden Hotten sit down and stimulate his powers, and drool two or three original chapters onto the end of that book? Would not the world seem cold and hollow to you? Would you not feel that you wanted to die and be at rest? Little the world knows of true suffering. And suppose, on the strength of having evolved these marvels from his own consciousness, he should go and "copyright" the entire book. And suppose that on top of all this, he continually and persistently forgot to offer you a single penny or even send you a copy of your mutilated book to



him. Let one suppose all this. Let him suppose it with strength enough, and then he will know something about wee. Sometimes when I read one of those additional chapters constructed by John Camden Hotten, I feel as if I want to take a broom-straw and go and knock that man's brains out. Not in anger, for I feel none. Oh! not in anger, but only to see, that is all. Mere idle curiosity.

Yes—to come back to the original subject, which is the sorrow that is slowly but surely undermining my health—Mr. Hotten prints unrevised, uncorrected, and, in some respects, spurious books, with my name to them as author, and thus embitters his customers against one of the most innocent of men. Messrs. George Routledge & Sons are the only English publishers who pay me any copyright, and therefore, if my books are to disseminate either suffering or crime among readers of our language, I would ever so much rather they did it through that house, and then I could contemplate the spectacle calmly as the dividends came in.

I am, Sir, &c.,  
Samuel L. Clemens ("Mark Twain")

[Speech]

## NEWT'S LATEST VICTORY

*From an April 7 speech given by House Speaker Newt Gingrich at a conference in Washington, D.C., sponsored by GOPAC, a political action committee that supports Gingrich and other Republicans.*

One of the hardest things for people to understand, particularly the news media—and I don't mean this as an attack, I just mean it as a comment—is that the number one product of GOPAC is ideas.

And we have a symbol of what we have accomplished. And I am going to—I am not going to put this on. This is a Mongolian hat, and this was brought back by a young man on Dick Arney's staff who went to Mongolia. There was a story—and I want to commend the *Washington Post* because yesterday there was a story, which I'm going to read for a moment, entitled, "In Mongolia, a GOP-Style Revolutionary Movement: Republican-Inspired Contract Helped End Communist Rule."

"Ulan Bator, Mongolia: On a stool in his portable felt and canvas yurt, Yadamsuren, a seventy-year-old nomadic sheepherder, offered

a visitor chunks of sheep fat and shots of fermented mare's milk to ward off the unspeakable cold. . . . Many miles from the nearest neighbor, he spoke glowingly of the work of House Speaker Newt Gingrich and the Republican Party."

I am not making this up. I am reading from the *Washington Post*. Now, this is a direct quote from Mr. Yadamsuren. "I read the contract with the voter very closely." Everyone did, he said, explaining why he decided to vote for a new government in Mongolian elections last year.

"In what was once an impenetrable Soviet satellite, a remarkably young democratic government has taken power. . . . A key element behind the victory, say Mongolia's new leaders, was a carefully engineered strategy by American Republican political operatives."

Isn't it exciting to know that not only in America but in Mongolia, ideas are working?

Now, I did not expect this, though I did meet with four Mongolians at a debate in Williamsburg. A friend of ours had four Mongolian legislators with him, and they said, "Oh, you must come," preferably from July 11 to 13, during the period of the Three Manly Games, which is the annual festival of the people of Mongolia. And they said, "We would really have a great time, because all of us read the Contract with America."

Well, I didn't realize it at the time, but they printed 350,000 copies of the Contract with Mongolia. It is the largest single publication in the Mongolian language in history, beating out both Mao and Marx. It was delivered by truck, by bus, by car, by camel, and by horse. And 91 percent of the population voted, and it was a surprise victory for the forces of free enterprise, private property, lower taxes, and smaller government.

So our first message for tonight is that we are winning the war of ideas.

[Traits]

## THE WONDER OF DOUGHBOY

*From "Meet the Pillsbury Doughboy," a set of guidelines Pillsbury gives to advertising agencies that are developing commercials for the company.*

*The Doughboy—Who Is He?*

The Doughboy is dough incarnate. His very being is magical. Originally called "Poppin' Fresh," the Doughboy has a full personality that encompasses the naiveté of a child and





By Italian artist Mario Mariotti, who painted his own hands for the photographs. The photos appeared in his books *Hands Off!* and *Hand Games*, published by Kane/Miller Book Publishers in Brooklyn, New York. Mariotti died in March.

the wisdom of a seasoned chef. He talks about his products, but he is not a shill or a salesman. The Doughboy understands the nurturing values of homemade baked goods. He is creative, somewhat lighthearted, and unpredictable. While he's a corporate spokesman, it cannot be forgotten that he's also an imp.

#### Animation

The Doughboy should be able to participate fully in Pillsbury advertising as a character that moves and talks and interacts with people in the commercial or with viewers.

He can pop out of fresh dough packages, from cookie jars, or from behind packages on the grocery-store shelf. He can carry the entire commercial, or appear briefly as an attention getter. He not only walks and talks but has the ability to sing, blush, wink, and work with little devices like pointers, dance canes, etc. As new commercials are developed, he may "ice-skate" on cookie sheets, slide down a row of cans in the dairy case, or "logroll" packages onto the screen. He can also play musical instruments. Additionally, he can do the extraordinary; i.e., leap long distances or get biscuits to march.

Research indicates that he is more relevant and credible to consumers when he lives in the human world rather than in his world.

#### Physical Appearance

- He is made of dough and has mass.
- His skin must look like dough: off-white, smooth but not glossy.

- He is slightly luminous but does not have a sheen.
- Knees, elbows, wrists, fingers, ears, and ankles are not visible.
- Rear views do not include "buns."
- His walking motion is characterized as a "swagger."
- His stomach is proportional to his entire mass. Therefore, his spine is not curved excessively.
- He is not portly.

#### [Activities]

## THE NIGHT SUSAN B. STAYED HOME

From "Suffragette Evening," in *Bright Ideas for Entertaining*, a book of theme parties by Mrs. Herbert B. Linscott, published in 1905 by George W. Jacobs & Co. The portion excerpted below was reprinted in issue number 2 of *Not to Scale*, a zine composed of historical and contemporary primary documents, published in New York City.

#### A NEW WOMAN PARTY

A new woman party is founded on the supposition that, if women are to do men's work in the world, the occupations of the sterner sex must change also and become those formerly handled by women. Accordingly, the men who attended the new woman party found them-



selves detailed to feminine occupations, while upon the women were thrust the tasks popularly supposed to belong to men alone.

#### *Women Dress Mannish*

Falling in with the plans for the evening, the women dressed in a somewhat mannish way, and each one brought an apron for her escort.

#### *Unique Decorations*

The house was decorated with posters, "women's rights" signs, and jokes and pictures cut from magazines. The hostess received the guests, while her husband sat in a corner and "looked wise." The young men were put to a severe test, for they were asked to be quiet while the women discussed politics. The man who managed longest to keep from breaking in or disturbing the peace during this performance was presented with an eggbeater.

#### *Suffrage Jokes and Questions*

The woman who originated the best joke on the suffrage question was given a necktie, while the man who regaled the company with the best original description of a new evening gown was presented with a rolling pin tied with blue ribbons "to use when things get too thick."

#### *Women Drive Nails, and Men Make Buttonholes*

Each lady in the company was then given a strip of soft wood, six nails, and a little hammer; the men received strips of linen with buttonholes cut in them, needles, and thread. A lively feature it proved to be. The room rang with laughter and good-natured chaffing.

#### *Men Write Recipes, Ladies Invest in Stock*

The next feature was, if possible, even more gaily absurd and fun-provoking than those that went before, for here both divisions of the company were given pencils and paper, the gentlemen being asked to write directions for making fancy dishes, such as angelfood cake, chicken croquettes, and salads, while the ladies were called upon to say how they would go about investing in stocks. A longer time was allowed for this difficult feature than for the foregoing bouts. Afterward the papers were read aloud. They were hugely enjoyed by the opponents.

#### *Men Do the Cooking*

The climax was reached when the women tied the aprons about the men's waists and led them into the kitchen, where bowls of pancake batter stood ready for the griddles. Each man made cakes for two, while the women sat by and discussed hats and frills. However, the hostess took pity on her guests and served an appetizing course.

#### [Game Cards]

## WOMYN'S ISSUES

*From "karma cards" used in the board game "C'est la Vie! The Game of Lesbian Life," manufactured by Play on Words in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The object of the game, in which players "travel through life's events such as softball, camping, careers, womyn's festival, commitment ceremony, and retirement," is to accumulate both cash and "karma tokens."*

**Y**ou see your best friend's girlfriend at a party—without your best friend—and then make out with her until 4:00 A.M. Forfeit two tokens.

You pass up the opportunity to intervene in the racially based maltreatment of a co-worker because "it doesn't concern you." Forfeit two tokens.

You slide into second base with your cleats up, injuring the second-base player. Forfeit two tokens.

You become involved in a heated debate, yet manage to share your beliefs in a calm and peaceful manner. Collect one token.

You host a "Welcome Party" for a lesbian co-worker who is new in town. Collect one token.

You blow off your volunteer work shift at the Womyn's Festival. Forfeit two tokens.

You are in a committed relationship but are sending sexual innuendos to the shortstop on your ball team. Forfeit two tokens.

You take your Saint Bernard, Stella, to the Children's Hospital on Saturdays to visit the young inpatients. Collect one token.

You declare your home off-limits to family members who refuse to recognize your domestic partnership. You protect your sacred space. Collect one token.

You offer your services, gratis, as legal defense for gays in the military. Collect one token.

You write a love note on your partner's banana skin when you are packing her lunch. Collect one token.

Your catcher is 0 for 3 after her third time at bat. You pat her on the back and say, "Don't worry. The beer and burgers will still taste good." Collect one token.

You listen objectively to your straight friend's problems with her stupid boyfriend. Collect one token.





This photograph by Catherine Karnow appeared in *Women in the Material World*, published by Sierra Club Books.

[Rumination]

## A SECOND CHANCE

By Lydia Davis, from *Almost No Memory*, a collection of her stories to be published this month by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

If only I had a chance to learn from my mistakes, I would, but there are too many things you don't do twice; in fact, the most important things are things you don't do twice, so you can't do them better the second time. You do something wrong, and see what the right thing would have been, and are ready to do it, should you have the chance again, but the next experience is quite different, and your judgment is wrong again, and although you are now prepared for this experience should it repeat itself, you are not prepared for the next experience. If only, for instance, you could get married at eighteen twice, then the second time you could make sure you were not too young to do this, because you would have the perspective of being older and would know that the person advising you to marry this man was giving you the wrong

advice because his reasons were the same ones he gave you the last time he advised you to get married at eighteen. If you could bring a child from a first marriage into a second marriage a second time, you would know that generosity could turn to resentment if you did not do the right things and resentment back to kindness if you did, unless the man you married when you married a second time for the second time was quite different in temperament from the man you married when you married a second time for the first time, in which case you would have to marry that one twice also in order to learn just what the wisest course would be with a man of his temperament. If you could have your mother die a second time you might be prepared to fight for a private room that had no other person in it watching television while she died, but if you were prepared to fight for that, and did, you might have to lose your mother again in order to know enough to ask them to put her teeth in the right way and not the wrong way before you went into her room and saw her for the last time grinning so strangely, and then yet one more time to make sure her ashes were not buried again in that plain sort of airmail container in which she was sent north to the cemetery.





This photograph of a child actor during a break on a film set appeared in *East Forward: Growing Up in the Shadow of Hollywood*, by Laura Greenblatt, published by Alfred A. Knopf/Melcher Media.

[Poem]

## THE BOB HOPE POEM

From "The Secret Life of Capital," part one of "The Bob Hope Poem," in *Spring Comes to Chicago*, by Campbell McGrath, published by Ecco Press. McGrath lives in Miami Beach.

*Money, said the seven sages of Greece, is the blood and soul of men and he who has none is a dead man among the living.*

—Scipio de Gramont, *Le Dernier Royal*

They say in this issue of *People* that Bob Hope is in a hot dispute about a piece of real estate in southern California.

As he likes to joke with Jay on Johnny he owns at least half of everything left out there, the yucca flats and salt pans beyond Antelope Valley, the chaparral and scrub oak of the Santa Monica Mountains, dry hills and canyons so far out it must have seemed nuts to imagine the city could ever reach them.

But now it has, and it's his, and he wants a championship golf course and hundreds of beautiful ranch-style homes to replace this particular oasis above the smog line, he likes developers more than conservationists, doesn't understand the theory, really, old school, rights of property, it's his and he'll do what he likes, so what if he's a nonagenarian he wants that extra twenty-five million bucks so bad he can taste it.

There are those who cannot comprehend this line of reasoning.

What is it with this generation of white men from southern California, the oil barons and water hoarders, the highway builders, the golf players, the dream merchants and the oligarchs and the last frontiersmen, Uncle Walt and the Duke, Nixon's Committee of 100, and the whole Reagan crew,



who willingly testified to their fondness for  
none but former Marines and self-made mil-  
lionaires like themselves?

They are such fossils!  
I mean that constructively.

Is not the very earth we stand upon built from  
the bones of the past?

Are not these men somehow akin to the  
animate saber-rattling skeletons of a  
Saturday morning Sinbad movie,  
synecdochical cenotaphs of war and hegemony,  
of the Great Depression and the Pax  
Americana,  
a golden age of capital acquisition when the  
romance of wealth glowed like some  
uncharted Polynesian atoll awaiting initial  
contact,

though they say  
no man is an island,

and I assume that these of all men would deny  
the implicitly pro-union metaphor of  
sedimentation,  
preferring instead the heroic agency of  
individual enactment, the volcanic will that  
lifted the Hawaiian archipelago from the  
deep Pacific abyss,  
which indeed is one of the two viable geologi-  
cal models for island-building—the other  
being the slow communal accretion of coral.

The thing that really gets me about Bob is,  
there should be no magical aura or mystical  
signification attached to money.  
A house, a car, a pool, a mountain, a harem, an  
empire: it buys a lot, but nothing you don't  
know about.  
There is no phantom realm: fat cats eat club  
sandwiches and drink iced tea after eighteen  
holes just like you do.  
So maybe they had pheasant last night and you  
had Dinty Moore, does it really matter?  
I honestly believe that Dinty Moore tastes  
better, which is beside the point, I admit,  
but who says we can't engage in a little  
sophistry

in pursuit of our ideals?

Sure, money's more powerful than neutron  
bombs,

it is the lever of Archimedes,  
it is the rainbow  
but not the pot of gold.

It's a beautiful metaphor, a poetic analogy,

a diagram,  
a model,  
a map of the stars,

doppelgänger, robot, tool, system, language,  
operating software for the supercomputer of  
Western civilization.

It is a means to an end, and to make of it an  
end in itself is the worst kind of semantic  
confusion,  
mistaking the mechanics of an imperfect  
system for the values that system seeks to  
describe,  
like mastering the laws of astrophysics without  
stopping to look at the stars, like memorizing  
road maps before learning to drive a car.

[Epiphany]

## TED TURNER'S BIG LETDOWN

*From a February 5 speech given by Ted Turner in  
New York City at a lunch sponsored by the Ameri-  
can Society of Magazine Editors.*

Once you make a billion dollars, it's not  
that big of a deal.

Years ago, there was a time when my stock  
was rising quickly. I knew how many shares of  
stock I had—I had only one stock, I never had  
time to play the market—and I figured out that  
if the stock hit a certain point, I was going to  
be a billionaire. I was still in the tiny office  
where I was when I was worth only a few mil-  
lion. I couldn't tell anyone at the office. All of  
my friends were working at the company—the  
highest-paid person made about \$100,000—  
and I was so much richer than my other friends  
in Atlanta that I couldn't tell them, because  
they'd think I was bragging. So I went home  
and told my wife, and she said, "I don't care,  
I've got to help the kids with their homework."  
No one even cared. I thought bells and whistles  
would go off. Nothing happened at all. Having  
great wealth is one of the most disappointing  
things. It's overrated, I can tell you that. It's  
not as good as average sex. Average sex is bet-  
ter than being a billionaire.



◆  
*Like ocean navigation or printing, money and credit are techniques, which can be reproduced and perpetuated. They make up a single language, which every society speaks after its fashion, and which every individual is obliged to learn.*

*Emmanuel Bataillon: Civilization and Capitalism*

◆  
Money talks.

It coughs, cries, whispers, screams, wheedles,  
boasts, exhorts,  
it is Doolittle's polyglot  
and the fall of the Tower of Babel.

a mirror,  
a flag,  
a signal fire

in the smoke of whose burning we live out our  
lives.

Mesopotamian barley and the cattle of the  
Visigoths,  
the milling of corn and steel and wood pulp,  
wampum, feathers, cowrie shells, dogs' teeth,

T-bills, junk bonds, derivatives, munis, arbs  
and strips,  
salt, tobacco, leather, pigs, nails, ingots,  
bullion,  
the ceremonial stone wheels of the lost empire  
of Yap,

Rockefeller's lucky nickels and Bill Gates's  
paper billions,  
crude oil into gasoline, raw molasses into rum,  
the Arabs from whom we borrowed the zeros of  
our millions

and the Lydians minting gold beneath Croesus'  
thumb,  
silk merchants of Venice, the credit banks of  
Genoa,  
heavy-laden slave ships bound for Charleston,  
Havana, Belém,

schillings, shekels, rubles, rupees, dinars,  
escudos, drachma,  
yen, sen, won, kips, leks, birrs, dong, sylis,  
kyats, takas, kwanzas,  
ringgits, tugriks, quetzals, ngultrums, bolivars,  
balboas,

moolah,  
jack,  
simoleons, and mazuma:

it all amounts to the same thing,  
which is everything

or nothing,  
depending on where you stand.

Location, location, location,  
as they say  
in the real estate biz.

◆  
*At a certain season of our life we are accustomed to consider every spot as the possible site of a house. I have thus surveyed the country on every side within a dozen miles of where I live. In imagination I have bought all the farms in succession, for all were to be bought, and I knew their price. I walked over each farmer's premises, tasted his wild apples, discoursed on husbandry with him, took his farm at his price, mortgaging it to him in my mind; even put a higher price on it,—took everything but a deed of it,—took his word for his deed, for I dearly love to talk,—cultivated it, and him too to some extent, I trust, and withdrew when I had enjoyed it long enough, leaving him to carry it on. This experience entitled me to be regarded as a sort of real-estate broker by my friends.*

—Thoreau, *Walden*

◆  
So you see, we're not blind to that blissful allure.

We too have tasted those wild apples,  
we too have taken word for deed,

though not without a title search, termite  
inspection, and an additional three and a  
half points up front.

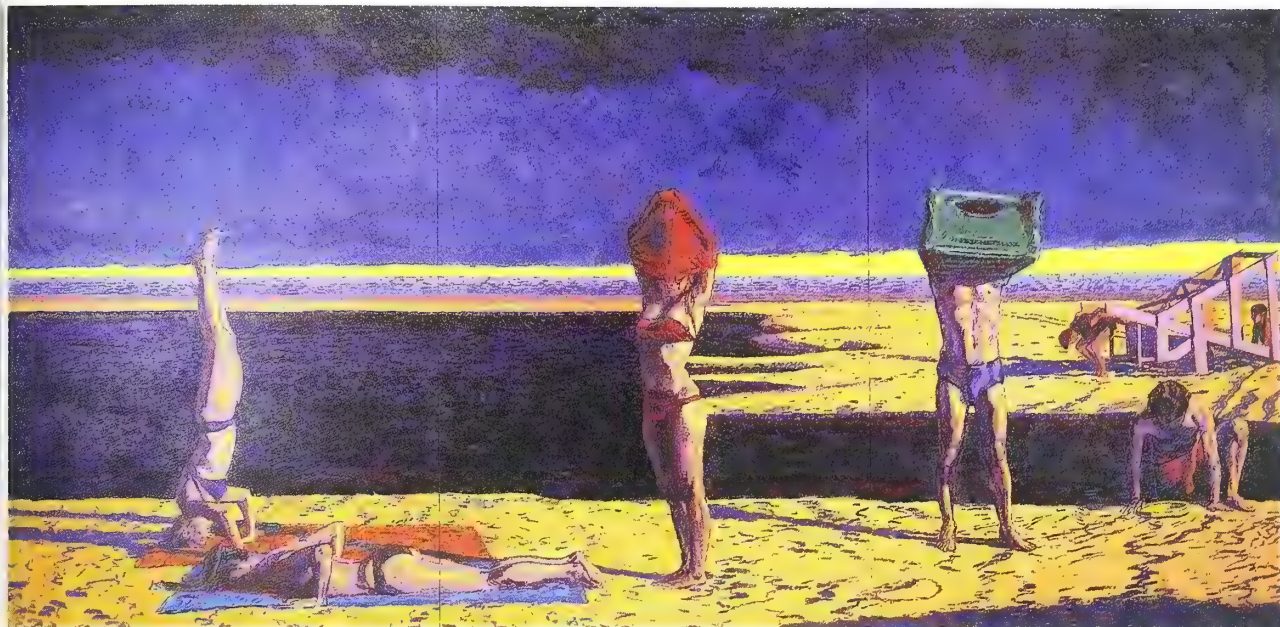
Land speculation  
is a national fixation!

From the thirteen colonies to the three-  
millionth subdivision, William Penn to  
William Levitt, Benjamin Franklin to  
Donald Trump.

It was Jefferson himself who had laid the grid  
for the national survey, the great lineation,  
the mighty matrix,  
the checkerboard plat in which we are stuck  
like squared-off sardines in kindergarten  
cubbyholes  
or freight containers stacked in a drafty  
warehouse, any one of which could be full of  
cash, if the price is right,  
though most contain shipments of knock-off  
athletic shoes, plastic combs or fuzzy troll  
pencil eraser toys manufactured in Hong  
Kong.

Who can tell, from this distance, just where to  
place their bet?  
Which meridian to mortgage, which cubby to  
corner?





Georgica Bathers, by Graham Nickson. The painting was on display in March at the Salander-O'Reilly Galleries in New York City.

Which special seminar to master the arcane  
science of squeezing profit from land with no  
money down as seen on late-night cable TV?

Not that it's an easy trick to bear in mind the  
object lessons of Dave Del Dotto or  
commodity fetishism  
when bombarded by America's insistent visions  
of dancing sugar plums and juicy starlets'  
implanted breasts in *People* magazine,  
when *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*  
demeans you daily with exclusive tidbits  
from the latest tropical fantasy retreat,

the hippest high desert mineral-mud spa,  
the in, the with-it, the p.c., the now.

Who can keep the jargon straight?

It's like these academic journals my friend  
David sends me from Berkeley, *Social  
Inquest*, *Contemporary Amazonia*, *The Bulletin  
of Marxist Heuristics*.

Here's a totemistic reconsideration of Franz  
Boas among the Kwakiutl, bear and salmon,  
eagle and orca,  
the potlatch as a model of economic reversal  
akin to the Toka ceremony of Western  
Melanesia.

Here's an investigation into the spiritual  
subjugation of the legendarily ferocious  
Munducuru,

disarmed not by strength or guile of the soldiers  
and missionaries crawling up the brown river  
fingers of the Amazon hand,

but by salt, manioc flour, cotton,  
iron and sugar and rice.

Here's an analysis of the magico-religious  
peasant culture of the Cauca Valley in  
Colombia,  
where mystification at the essential life force of  
money has led to *el bautizo del billete*, the  
illegal baptism of peso notes,  
to make their capital fruitful, lucky, blessed, so  
that it will return, like a homing pigeon,  
trailing flocks of fellow bills as literal interest,  
flights of animate currency in the wake of  
the sanctified rainmaker.

◆

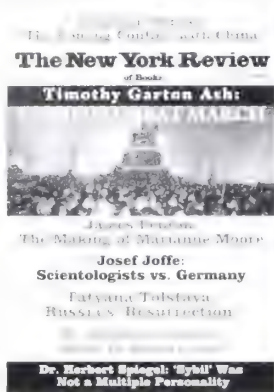
One of the few successful black store owners in  
the village was saved from a great loss only by a  
most unusual coincidence. Serving in his shop he  
was startled to hear a strange noise in his cash  
register. Peering in he saw two bills fighting with  
each other for possession of the contents, and he  
realized that two customers, each with their own  
baptized bills, must have just paid them over and  
were awaiting their return. This strange coinci-  
dence allowed him to prevent the spiriting away  
of his cash.

—Michael Taussig, "The Genesis of Capital-  
ism Amongst a South American Peasantry:  
Devil's Labor and the Baptism of Money" ■



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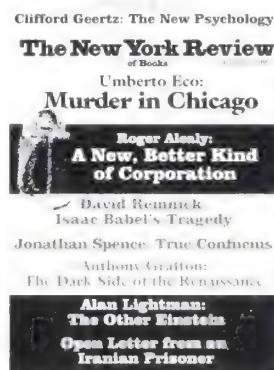
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# THE FEDERAL CHAIN-SAW MASSACRE

Clinton's Forest Service  
and clear-cut corruption  
*By Paul Roberts*

**O**n a cold October afternoon, just hours before last year's first big snowstorm, I'm hiking with a pair of federal foresters in Washington's Wenatchee National Forest, learning to divine the future of trees. The task would appear to be simple. The ponderosa pines, their grayish-brown bark mottled with tiny lichens and strands of pale moss, are here and there tagged with blue or orange paint. Blue paint, in the language of the U.S. Forest Service, means money. It tells loggers that a particular tree has been surveyed and assessed and offered for "harvest," and that—barring environmental litigation, acts of Congress, or lumber-market downturns—it may be cut down and hauled off to local mills. Orange paint, by contrast, signifies a "leave" tree, one deemed ecologically worth sparing. On this particular hillside, which is part of a 1,500-acre federal timber sale called Pendleton Canyon, orange blobs outnumber blue ones by a hefty margin, leading me, in my urban ignorance, to conclude that few trees will feel the chain saw. I have it exactly backward. In apologetic tones, a short, wiry forester named Bob Stoehr explains that with sales like this one, where most of the trees are to be cut, blue paint is largely unnecessary: "It's a lot easier just to mark the trees you're leaving behind."

Neither Stoehr nor his colleague, a tall, lanky fellow named Elton Thomas, seems especially at ease in the woods today. Hunters are out; the sign at the main gate was freshly stitched by bullet holes. Also, both foresters have been assigned

the unenviable task of extolling the federal timber program to a journalist at a time when that program is widely regarded as a money-losing, landscape-destroying boondoggle. Throughout the day, my guides gamely salt our conversation with helpful correctives to this unflattering opinion. As we step from the agency's Suburban and into forest, for example, Thomas offers the first of several assurances that the Pendleton is not a "virgin" forest, the kind that, if logged, makes environmentalists apoplectic. Most of the local "old growth," he says, was turned into trestles and siding and fruit boxes a century ago. What remains is a somewhat less sacrosanct, second-growth forest. We plod steadily upward, swerving around trunks and beneath outstretched branches. The air becomes colder by the minute. Rifles bark in the distance. I stop before a large pine, which, at perhaps 30 inches wide and 150 feet tall, looks suspiciously old. Stoehr takes from his vest a corkscrew-like device and, with a few athletic twists, drives its hollow bit into the tree's heart. He reverses the bit, extracts a tubular sample of heartwood, and lets me count the clearly visible annual rings—about eighty years' worth. Stoehr nods. Hardly ancient.

Yet for all its demonstrated youth, the forest doesn't lack an authentic woodsy appeal. The deep quiet and the sweet smells of pine resin and moldering needles entice a full range of woodland creatures: mule deer, elk, coyote, and cougar, plus assorted hikers and hunters. Sadly for

*Paul Roberts's last article for Harper's Magazine, "Virtual Grub Street," appeared in the June 1996 issue.*



them, these trees have also caught the interest of local logging companies, which will bid on the Pendleton acres this summer and, if all goes as planned, will arrive in early September with saws and bulldozers and winches. Pendleton is expected to generate 6 million board feet of timber—enough to fill 1,200 logging trucks or build 600 homes—worth \$3 million on the volatile lumber market. In exchange for this public asset, the logging company will pay the Forest Service anywhere from \$900,000 to \$1.5 million or more, depending on the market and the number of bidders. Not that the public will see much of that money. Selling federal timber is expensive. Carving out new logging roads to Pendleton will cost the Forest Service \$30,000 per mile, and the agency pays for a myriad of other planning and administrative expenses—everything from pre-sale surveying to post-sale replanting (including orange and blue paint). In the end, the sum returned to the U.S. Treasury will be considerably less than what the logging company pays. In fact, between 1992 and 1994, according to a new Government Accounting Office study, the Wenatchee's timber program lost nearly \$19 million.

Not surprisingly, then, Thomas and Stoehr aren't talking about profits but about a topic less vulgar: "forest health." As with other national forests, trees across much of the 2.2-million-acre Wenatchee have been diagnosed as overcrowded and under stress, and thus highly vulnerable to insects. Not only do bugs destroy billions of dollars' worth of timber; all that standing deadwood, in eastern Washington's desert

air, dries out and turns into kindling, or "fuel load," which after a summer lightning strike can burn hotter and faster than napalm. Three years ago, wildfires charred 140,000 acres on the Wenatchee and 4 million acres nationwide, prompting timber companies, the Forest Service, Congress, and, finally, the Clinton Administration to declare a "forest health crisis" and to search feverishly for its cure. What they settled on was "salvage logging," a kind of arboreal amputation: culling dead trees before they burn and thinning live ones before they attract bugs. This procedure isn't really even "logging," agency officials insist; indeed, that nasty word has been all but replaced by terms like "treatment" and "stewardship." It is, however, one heck of a big job. One eighth of the Wenatchee National Forest, for example, is reportedly ripe for wildfire, and the requisite treatments will keep federal foresters and logging companies busy for decades.

"We'll never get through it all," says Thomas of the tens of thousands of trees still to be removed.

"I'll be retired long before we really even get started."

**T**he notion that the Forest Service must chop down a substantial chunk of America's public woodlands to protect the remainder—that we must, in effect, log our forests to save them—is not a view to which everyone subscribes. Scientists and activists who watch the national forests regard the "forest health crisis" as willful malpractice. Yes, western forests are burning up at an accelerating rate: last summer alone saw 6 million acres—an area the size of Vermont—turn to ashes. Yet the conflagrations stem as much from a decade-long drought out West and a century of misguided forest management as from bugs. And although pine bark beetles and other wood-devouring insects are rampant in many of America's 155 national forests, forestry scientists remain divided over the severity of the problem—and even over whether "treatment" by salvage logging isn't worse for the forests than bugs or fire.

Just as dubious is the suggestion that the crisis will be cured by the Forest Service, an agency that is not known for having a healing touch. In 1995, for example, when Congress gave the Forest Service carte blanche to remove diseased trees, the agency declared thousands of acres of perfectly healthy trees "sick" so that they could be sold and logged. That diagnosis was entirely in character for what is essentially a timber bureaucracy, one whose budget is tied to the number of trees it can "harvest" and whose managers have long been rewarded for keeping those harvests high—even if it meant selling trees at a loss or breaking environmental laws. Or exaggerating a "health crisis." Indeed, although few dispute that some of America's forests are ailing, it's surely no coincidence that "forest health" became the Forest Service's chief concern in the late 1980s—just as environmentalist lawsuits were restricting traditional logging on national forests. "Treatment," it turns out, is far more politically and culturally palatable than "logging," even if it means the same thing.

This is not how things were supposed to turn out. Four years ago, Bill Clinton stood at a forestry "summit" in Portland, Oregon, promising not only to end the strife between loggers and environmentalists but to change the forest policies that had caused the war. And although Clinton was already famous for broken promises, signs abounded that this one might be different. Whereas Bush and Reagan knew little about their administrations' forest policies, Clinton devoured thick briefing books on spotted owls, impoverished timber towns, and the litigation that had shut

## CLINTON'S FOREST SERVICE HAS DECLARED MILLIONS OF HEALTHY TREES "SICK" SO THAT THEY CAN BE LOGGED AND SOLD





down federal forests in the Northwest. Once installed at the summit's large wooden conference table, the President fairly glowed with executive empathy, listening earnestly to testimony from loggers, wildlife biologists, and timber-town mayors as well as asking probing questions of his own.

Of course, just how the President planned to solve the mess in the Northwest—or anywhere else in the country's 191 million acres of national forest—wasn't clear. But there were hints. In yet another departure from White House tradition, Clinton placed blame for the forest crisis on the federal government, which "for too long . . . has done more to confuse the issue than to clarify it." The implication was clear: the timber status quo—the unsustainable harvest levels; the below-cost timber sales; the corrupt triangle of timber barons, Congress, and the Forest Service—was itself an endangered species. U.S. timber policy, Clinton insisted, would henceforth be based on science; he would even appoint a wildlife biologist to run the Forest Service. The era of Big Timber was over. "I cannot," Clinton declared, "repeal the laws of change."

Four years later, Clinton's timber policy is in shambles. His biologist has resigned, his Forest

Service is "treating" a conveniently endless crisis, and environmentalists and loggers are back at each other's throats. Meanwhile, the owners of the national forests—the public—remain as confused and uninvolved as ever: vaguely opposed to logging yet consuming more wood products than any other people on earth and, for the most part, completely clueless as to why or how the government is selling their trees.

**T**he Forest Service is unique among federal agencies in that its power derives chiefly and almost directly from the physical world. The agency controls 300,000 square miles of forests and rangeland—a Texas-size total that accounts for 8 percent of the U.S. landmass. Geographically speaking, it is very much a western agency: national forests are scattered from Alaska to Maine, but 92 percent of the system's acreage lies left of the 100th meridian. This is by and large rugged territory, remnants of the old frontier, which has helped foster the agency's image as a kind of country cousin, a rough-hewn western type who knows birdcalls, likes to sleep on the ground, and chafes at the fancy-pants bean counters in Washington, D.C.



Actually, the Forest Service is among the Beltway's more adept insiders. Although its national office, in a four-story, red-brick edifice one block east of the Mall, is formally charged with administering all 155 national forests, officials there historically have focused on more proximate matters: lobbying congressional budget writers and stopping the undersecretary of

railroads, timber and mining interests, and homesteaders.<sup>2</sup> With few exceptions—mostly in the Pacific Northwest—the “reserved” forests were those the timber companies had rejected: high-elevation tracts with spindly, low-quality trees, steep hillsides, and no easy access.

In 1905, Congress created the U.S. Forest Service to manage these lands, placing the agency,

tellingly, under the Department of Agriculture: trees were a crop, one that, under “sustained yield” management, could theoretically be harvested, replanted, and harvested again, forever. Prior to World War II, however, private forests were still booming, and industry, fearing a timber glut, opposed federal logging. But as the vast private stands became exhausted by the war effort and the exploding housing market, the nation turned to the federal forests. First up was the Pacific Northwest, home to some of the world’s largest trees, which new road-building techniques put within reach.

Thus did the Forest Service, industry, and Congress find themselves in a mutually beneficial trinity. Logging companies now had access to a large, publicly managed stock. Timber-state lawmakers could bring home

agriculture, a White House appointee who oversees the agency, from doing anything rash. Over the decades, the Forest Service has excelled at both tasks, keeping timber-state lawmakers sated with public timber and keeping the hapless undersecretary, as one forestry scientist puts it, “exactly like a mushroom: in the dark, fed nothing but bullshit.”

As for the agency’s rugged western geographic disposition, that’s mostly a historical accident. By the late 1800s, when Congress belatedly set aside federal forest “reserves,” eastern forests had already been razed,<sup>1</sup> and those in the lowland West were rapidly being divided among

timber jobs, win industry campaign contributions, and take credit for vast new Treasury revenues: for years, timber was touted as the only “profitable” federal program. Moreover, the Forest Service was awarded with an expanding budget: timber sales required planning and administration, which required budget appropriations; more sales meant larger budget requests, which timber-state lawmakers happily delivered. As importantly, Congress gradually gave the agency discretionary authority over an ever larger chunk of timber-sale receipts. Thus by selling more timber, agency officials could grow their own budgets, staffs, and operations.

<sup>1</sup> Large-scale commercial harvests began, in earnest in Maine, moving toward the Great Lakes as forests became exhausted. The consequences were dire: erosion; silt-choked streams; and waste wood that fueled dozens of disastrous wildfires, including the Peshtigo, Wisconsin, blaze of 1871, which burned 1.3 million acres, killed 1,500 people, and galvanized public opinion on the need for federal forest management.

<sup>2</sup> In less than a decade, roughly half of the publicly owned forest lands passed to private hands, a staggering transfer of wealth that was laughably corrupt; thousands of “homesteaders” signed their parcels over to timber companies. California’s redwood forests were acquired by timber companies; one of the few unlogged tracts was later sold, for hundreds of millions of dollars, back to the federal government for Redwood National Park.





The results were predictable. From 1935 to 1955, the annual federal harvest jumped from 675 million board feet to 6.32 billion board feet, or more than a tenth of the total American harvest. With each election cycle, the role of the timber trinity grew larger. Industry, its appetite for public timber now whetted, lavished contributions on appropriations forestry subcommittees. Seats on those committees became plums for timber-state lawmakers, who funneled budget dollars<sup>3</sup> into the agency, which sold the timber to industry.

The impact of this budgetary back-scratching on national timber policy cannot be understated. Each year, agency officials set themselves an annual timber-sale goal, put in their budget requests, and then worked diligently to ensure that budgeted sales were actually sold. Indeed, to fall short of a sale target meant returning some of that year's appropriations; worse, it meant not being able to ask for an even higher appropriation the following year. Within the agency, "production" became the watchword. In the field, "getting out the cut" was the key to promotion; in Washington, D.C., meeting targets was the route to political and budgetary capital. By 1965, the federal harvest had climbed above 11 billion board feet. Federal forests now provided almost 25 percent of all domestic timber production—and there were those within the agency, Congress, and the timber industry who held that, with new methods of harvest, federal volume could be doubled, even trebled, sustainably, by the century's end.

I wanted to be a logger once. I grew up in a rural town in Washington State, awed by the large men who tumbled, laughing and bone-tired, from crew trucks after a day in the woods. Logging was the hardest job any of us could imagine, the best paying and the most dangerous, which made it hugely appealing to a young man desperate for masculine credentials. Logging seemed the ultimate test: most of the guys who tried out with a crew for the summer didn't last a week. They'd start you out "setting choke," cinching thick cables around the logs so that a winch could drag them away, and you had to be strong and fast and stay sharp all day, because trees were falling and logs were flying, and by the third or fourth day, it didn't matter how many times you'd boasted that you were "working in the woods" or how much you'd spent on the heavy pants and suspenders and boots that loggers wore, because if you couldn't cut it, you weren't a logger. Years later I would see just

how irrelevant that toughness had become in a service economy, and how loggers themselves were pawns in a larger political, economic, and cultural struggle. But not back then. Near the end of my senior year, as casually as I could, I told some friends who had logged that I was also thinking about spending the summer "in the woods," and one of them looked at my skinny arms and legs and my nervous, bespectacled gaze and smiled. "Roberts, you wouldn't last a day."

Two decades later, I'm still in awe, albeit for different reasons. Although logging remains one of the most physical trades, it has undergone substantial mechanization. Where forests are reasonably flat, tractor-mounted, metal-armed "harvesters" grab trees, saw them off at ground level, strip off the limbs, and stack the logs on a trailer. But in the national forests, where terrain is typically too steep, and trees are often too large, for such automation, loggers still use chain saws and set choke. The logs are hauled out with a "yarder," a massive contraption that looks like a cross between a steam shovel and a rope tow. The yarder sits at the top of the hillside, its cable stretching downslope as far as 1,000 feet to an anchor. After trees are felled, they're hooked to the cable's carriage, which drags them up the hill to waiting trucks. It's fast, loud, and incredibly dangerous: the big yarders can haul ten tons of logs uphill at thirty-five miles an hour. It's also marvelously efficient. A well-managed yarding operation can remove ten truckloads of timber a day and clear, or "clear-cut," a hillside in a few weeks.

Such efficiency is, however, quite costly to the environment. Clear-cuts make poor habitats for forest wildlife; clear-cut hillsides often erode, causing mud slides and choking streams with silt. They're also incredibly ugly—a wasteland of stumps, branches, and reject trees. For decades, the Forest Service forbade clear-cutting on federal lands, insisting that loggers take only mature trees and leave the smaller ones standing. But industry preferred clear-cutting's profitability, and, in time, Forest Service officials saw the practice's advantages in meeting sale targets. By the 1960s, clear-cutting had become the unofficial federal harvest policy—much to the irritation of hikers, birders, and others in the increasingly politicized outdoor community.

Agency officials countered with a soothing, "better living through science" rhetoric. "[Clear]-cutting is something like an urban renewal project, a necessary violent prelude to a new housing project," declared Forest Service Chief Edward Cliff before a 1965 gathering of garden-club of-

## THE TIMBER PROGRAM PUT THE FOREST SERVICE, CONGRESS, AND INDUSTRY IN A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TRINITY

<sup>3</sup> In fact, when the Forest Service submitted its annual budget, Congress typically approved 90 percent of the amount the agency requested for its timber program but far less for other programs, such as wildlife or recreation.



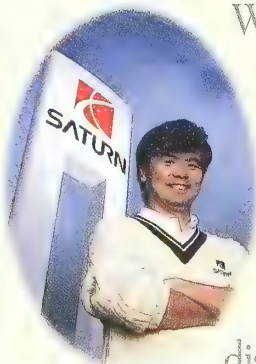




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trends in Portland, Oregon. It might, he allowed, cause a "temporary loss of natural beauty. But there is also promise of what is to come: a thrifty new forest replacing the old." Expanding on that

SALVAGE PROVIDES LOGGERS  
AND ZEALOTS INCENTIVE TO  
ROAM THE WOODS WITH A ZIPPO  
AND A CAN OF GAS

theme, in 1973, President Nixon said that the national forests were "overstocked with mature and overmature timber," and recommended speedy liquidation: the "main forestry issue facing us in the

next several decades is the rate at which this old-growth timber... is converted into new, well-managed stands of trees."

Despite this *House & Garden* pabulum, by the 1970s environmentalists had pushed through laws requiring the Forest Service to promote non-timber uses of national forests and prevent the extinction of forest wildlife. Soon agency scientists exploring the "overstocked" forests found a myriad of animals such as the northern spotted owl that depended on "overmature" trees. Other agency studies showed that, despite earlier claims of "sustained yield," federal forests had for decades been cut faster than they could regrow. By 1983, some agency officials concluded that harvest rates needed to fall. Industry, however, had no desire to lose access to federal trees, and pro-timber congressmen interceded, preventing the agency from lowering the cut. Environmentalists responded with the first of the "owl" lawsuits. On May 23, 1991, in a ruling that lambasted the Bush Administration for its "deliberate and systematic refusal" to follow forestry laws, U.S. District Judge William Dwyer of Seattle barred the Forest Service from selling Northwest trees until the agency could demonstrate, scientifically, how logging and owls could coexist.

The ramifications of the Dwyer decision were enormous. Northwest federal sales all but ceased; on the Wenatchee, for example, sale offerings dropped from 227 million board feet in 1990 to 15 million in 1991. Mills began to close. Within timber towns, anger at environmental "extremism" was epidemic. Actually, the Forest Service's own economists would later determine that job losses in the early 1990s had more to do with a recession and a sour market for new homes than with owl litigation. But in those heady days, it was "owls versus loggers," a brilliantly misleading slogan promoted by industry—and conveyed uncritically by the media—that framed the debate, with predictable results. In 1991, a spotted owl was nailed like a voodoo doll to a sign at Washington's Olympic National Park along with a note: "*If you think your parks and wilderness don't have enough of these suckers, plant this one. They talk of social unrest. The match has yet to be struck.*"

This, apparently, was no idle threat. In October 1991, five months after Dwyer, arsonists torched the Warner Creek drainage in north-central Oregon, charring 9,000 acres, about 1,200 of which was prime old-growth national forest previously set aside as owl habitat. No charges were ever filed, but among environmentalists, suspicion fell immediately on the logging community. Under a 1976 law, trees that burn—no matter where or why—can be sold by the Forest Service as "salvage" timber. One needn't have been especially paranoid to see that a large number of people—from unemployed loggers to overeager freelance firefighters to anti-environmental zealots—now had incentive to wander into the woods with a Zippo and a can of gas.

On a sweltering day last June, Phil Nanas and I rattle up a steep, winding logging road in the Oregon Cascades an hour east of Eugene. Dust rolls up behind Nanas's battered truck and pours in through the windows, where I taste it in the sandwich I'm trying to wolf down before we reach "the burn." Nanas, small, thin, in his mid-thirties, is a veteran critic of salvage logging, and he is anxious that I experience the practice's ramifications up close. "There it is," he says, pointing to a massive, ash-gray wedge running diagonally across an olive-green hillside. Most natural fires begin on hilltops, where lightning usually strikes. But the Warner Creek fire, like most arson fires, started down in a draw, near a road, then raced uphill in a gradually widening V. The hillside vanishes as we round a bend, reappearing moments later at considerably closer range. The effect is stunning: a monochromatic expanse of charred trunks and ash-gray soil. Below the burn grow shrubs and brilliant wildflowers. But these merely accent the destruction wrought by a fire so fierce that flames rose 400 feet and, in places, burned the soil down to bare rock. "Pretty bleak," says Nanas. "That's the problem."

It's a problem because fire's destruction provides an easy rationalization for salvage logging. Like most burned areas of federal forest, Warner Creek is to be sold as salvage, even though doing so will actually retard the recovering forest. Logging equipment tears up the already unstable hillside. Removing the blackened trees deprives the landscape of potential nutrients and wildlife habitat. The same is true in bug-infested forests, where soil disturbance from machinery and road building is harder on the forest than are the most voracious insects.

Salvage can, in theory, help prevent forest fires by removing "fuel load." Unfortunately, the Forest Service also wants its salvage sales to make money, and these goals are at odds. In the ideal thinning operation, loggers would take only small-



er trees, plus brush, logging debris, and other "fuels." But in real life, logging companies don't want small trees; at the timber mill, an eight-inch-wide log brings less than a quarter the price of a sixteen-incher. Brush and debris bring nothing. So agency officials often try to sweeten salvage sales by adding healthy "green" trees from neighboring sites, or by not requiring the loggers to remove fuels, or by cutting the sale price, and often all three. As a result, many "treated" forests remain almost as flammable as before.

Moreover, the argument that treatment is needed to prevent fires conveniently ignores the fact that fuel load is itself a product of federal forest policy. The periodic, low-intensity fires that once swept western forests, burning out woody debris while leaving older, thick-barked trees alive, have been actively suppressed for the last century, resulting in steady fuel accumulations. The great conflagrations of 1988, 1990, 1994, and 1996, which together blackened 31,000 square miles, were due in part to decades of overzealous fire fighting.<sup>4</sup> The only surer way to guarantee massive forest fires would be to spray the trees with gasoline.

Unfortunately, such complex ironies don't fit on a bumper sticker. What resonates among voters is that fire is bad, dead trees are ugly, and salvage must be a good idea, not least because salvage logging has some exceedingly persistent backers. Industry likes salvage because many burned trees, when stripped of their charred bark, are quite serviceable as lumber—and available to loggers at bargain prices. Congress likes it because harvesting even dead trees means timber jobs and campaign contributions. But salvage's most eager proponent is, once again, the Forest Service. Salvage sales, being an "emergency" measure, may exceed the normal forty-acre limit on clear-cut size and are also allowed in environmentally or geologically unstable forests, where

loggers are ordinarily prohibited. And, like everything else the agency supports, salvage means money: the Forest Service can keep *all* receipts from salvage sales in a kind of revolving slush fund earmarked for future salvage operations.

Even this practice began innocently. According to Robert Wolf, a former Congressional Research Service analyst who helped draft the 1976

salvage provision, lawmakers simply wanted to give the agency the flexibility to sell small amounts of timber to needy customers—say, a few thousand board feet to a hard-pressed local mill—even if such sales weren't budgeted. For years, the agency largely ignored the salvage loophole; as late as 1986, annual salvage receipts totaled just \$18 million. But the late 1980s witnessed two key events. First, agency officials could see that environmental litigation was eventually going to reduce regular, or "green," timber sales. Second, and more important, Bush Administration budget writers, under the banner of

deficit reduction, were scrutinizing all nonessential budget items, including appropriations for green-timber sales. But salvage sales, paid for by the slush fund, weren't an appropriated item; they were "off-budget" and effectively invisible to the Office of Management and Budget. Thus, when fires swept the West in 1987, the Forest Service grasped the new benefit of salvage: a way to sell trees and collect receipts without fear of environmentalists or deficit hawks. Lawmakers dubbed salvage an "emergency" measure and quietly added \$37 million to "prime" the salvage fund. "And suddenly," says Wolf, "every tree was very sick."

Agency officials everywhere began scouring their forests for anything remotely resembling a dead or dying tree, and between 1988 and 1989 salvage receipts quadrupled, from \$32 million to \$144 million. Slowly but surely, the federal timber program metamorphosed. In 1976, salvage sales had accounted for 762 million board feet and 7 percent of the total federal timber program. But by 1990, the Forest Service was moving 2.8 billion board feet of salvage, or 26 percent of the program. And by 1993, after two years of owl-related donkey business, salvage accounted for 42 percent



<sup>4</sup> Fire suppression, which costs taxpayers up to \$1 billion a year, enjoys huge popular and political support. "He never got to one of the most effective P.R. campaigns in history: Smokey the Bear. Introduced in 1944, the hardworking bear is today recognized by 95 percent of Americans."



of the agency's harvest and was bringing in \$100 million in receipts—every penny of which the agency was allowed to keep. In short, without announcing as much, the Forest Service was shifting its timber program toward the last politically safe source of volume. "We were told



that virtually every [timber] sale should include 'salvage' in the name," reads one 1992 agency memo obtained by the Associated Press. "Even if a sale is totally green [made up of live trees], as long as one board comes off that would qualify as salvage on the Salvage Sale Fund Plan, it should be called salvage."

One could argue that the agency was pushed into such disingenuousness by the pressures of environmental litigation, industry demands, and fickle politicians who, to this day, cannot decide whether a federal timber program is good or evil. But, in fact, the salvage shell game was indicative of deeper corruption within the Forest Service. In 1991, the agency created a task force to investigate charges that logging companies, with the complicity of federal foresters, were stealing hundreds of millions of dollars in federal trees every year. Over three years, the agency won multi-million-dollar settlements against a host of timber corporations. But in 1994, just as investigators were looking into particularly juicy allegations—namely, that the Weyerhaeuser Company had been stealing as many as 32,000 federal trees every month for years—the agency did an astonishing about-face. Task-force management was handed over to a Forest Service official previously implicated in the cover-up of timber theft. Investigations idled, and the agency

began harassing frustrated theft investigators who dared to take their findings public. By early 1995, the situation was so absurd that Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeff Kent, who was independently investigating timber theft, wrote to the Office of the Inspector General:

Even as the Chief of Special Prosecutions in Chicago, responsible for corruption and organized crime cases, I have never encountered in my twenty years as a prosecutor such a concerted effort by management to impede and sabotage the Congressionally mandated mission or such Machiavellian maneuvers to not only retaliate against but even to humiliate and break the spirit of these extraordinary public servants . . . . Hopefully this investigation will be a golden opportunity for your office to send a clear message to Forest Service management that obstruction, retaliation, intrigue, and abuse will no longer be tolerated. Do the right thing, for God's sake.

Kent's pleas went unheeded. In April 1995, the Forest Service chief suddenly disbanded the task force and scattered its investigators to the bureaucratic winds. Some of those investigators are currently seeking relief under federal laws that protect whistle-blowers. Today, the agency limits its investigations largely to the theft of Christmas trees and firewood; meanwhile, law-enforcement resources have been diverted toward



the investigation and arrest of less politically well-connected criminals: environmentalists protesting Forest Service timber practices.

Yet even abetting theft was not the timber program's worst offense. In the late 1970s, the Natural Resources Defense Council began scrutinizing one of the agency's proudest claims: namely, that federal timber sales turn a profit. After comparing sales receipts to the actual costs of administering those sales, the NRDC found that the "profitable" federal timber program was bleeding money. The NRDC, and later both the GAO and the Congressional Research Service, concluded that the Forest Service routinely hid or minimized expenses through questionable accounting methods. Road-building costs, for example, which can run up to hundreds of thousands of dollars per mile in steep, mountainous areas, were often amortized over 100 years—1,800 years, in several cases. And because the agency has kept an ever larger share of timber receipts, returns to the Treasury have been steadily whittled away.

According to government and independent auditors, once realistic accounting methods are



plied most federal forests actually lose money.<sup>5</sup> On the whole, the U.S. timber program has been in the black three times in its history: 1955, 1956, and 1969. From 1980 through 1991, the program lost nearly \$6 billion; and between 1992 and 1994, when the agency claims to have made \$1.1 billion, GAO calculations show instead a loss of nearly \$1 billion. Paradoxically, the more timber sold and the more the Treasury loses on the timber program, the more the Forest Service's budget grows. As Randal O'Toole, an Oregon economist and one of the first to scrutinize federal timber's alleged profitability, observes, the program "is nothing more than bureaucratic welfare."

One of the environmental movement's more memorable figures, O'Toole is five-foot-seven, bearded, with a pony tail and a propensity for theatrics (he once attended an environmental meeting wearing a cape and carrying a calculator in a holster). Yet by the early 1990s, O'Toole's numbers were helping even cautious observers to reach a rather bold conclusion: the agency not only had broken laws to over-cut its forests but had lost a considerable amount of money in the process. Agency apologists insisted that continued harvests were needed to provide jobs and income to timber communities. But as Robert Wolf and other critics argue, it would be cheaper to pay loggers directly out of the Treasury than to continue subsidizing the removal of an increasingly rare asset.<sup>6</sup>

Nor was it true that the U.S. market still "needed" federal trees. Reforestation efforts were finally bearing fruit, and private forests were more than compensating for federal declines. Pro-timber advocates note correctly that the United States imports increasing quantities of timber, mostly from Canada. But it's also worth noting that from 1991 to 1995, when the federal timber harvest was cut in half by owl litigation, America's total timber production (public and private) actually climbed by more than a billion board feet and timber companies were somehow able to export to Asia tens of thousands of "raw," or unprocessed, logs—and with them, the processing

jobs previously held by American workers. Some economists argued that continued federal harvest actually depressed prices for private foresters. In the early 1990s, a few environmentalists began making an economic case to end the federal timber program entirely. Mainstream greens dismissed the idea as extreme, but the so-called Zero Cut idea caught fire among grassroots groups out West, confirming the worst fears of every timber-town resident: that the radicals who chained themselves to trees in the 1980s were now trying to kill the industry altogether.

**T**he door to the lobby of the Northwest Forestry Association in downtown Portland is secured by an electronically activated dead bolt when I arrive. I press the call button and, after a few seconds, am buzzed inside by Chris West, the industry trade group's vice-president. West, a former Forest Service sale planner, quickly explains the tightened security: in 1995, a California timber lobbyist was killed by a mail bomb from the eco-fanatic Unabomber. "Makes you think," says West, guiding me back to an office overlooking the Willamette River. The walls are festooned with a collection of logger's hats and photographs of clear-cuts. On a bookshelf I spy a novelty item, a box of "Spotted Owl Helper—Just Add Spotted Owl."

West, a short, cheerful thirty-eight-year-old, assures me that he doesn't believe that most environmentalists want to blow industry officials to bits. But he and his colleagues have little doubt that "enviros" do wish to kill the federal timber program. He spreads a brightly colored graphic over his desktop that shows the impact of environmental litigation: 242 mill closures and 30,000-plus lost jobs in the Northwest. In 1992, when candidate Clinton assured loggers that he would hold a timber summit if elected, West says industry officials felt mildly hopeful: here, finally, was a national politician who wouldn't ignore the issue. But after Clinton and Gore won and began criticizing the federal timber program and raving about old trees, industry optimism turned to nausea. "What it showed," says West, "was a total lack of understanding."

In fact, Clinton made everyone queasy—mostly because no one knew where he stood on environmental matters. As governor of Arkansas, he had proposed logging restrictions, got tossed from office by a timber-backed campaign, then came back two years later largely cured of his green leanings. But on the presidential campaign trail, Clinton had somehow rediscovered his environ-

## THE MORE THE TREASURY LOSES ON THE TIMBER PROGRAM, THE MORE THE FOREST SERVICE'S BUDGET GROWS

<sup>5</sup> In 1995, proceeds from a "typical" \$1 million timber sale broke down as follows: \$71,000 deducted from the price as a road-building credit to the timber company; \$500,000 to the agency's various discretionary trusts; and \$375,000 to the counties in which the forest lies, leaving \$54,000 for the Treasury. Once all administrative costs are deducted from net receipts, the sale lost \$633,000. This doesn't include "indirect" costs, such as when reforestation fails and must be repeated, or when salmon runs, battered by erosion, must be restored.

<sup>6</sup> Along these lines, when a Washington State environmental group submitted the high bid for a timber sale in 1995, the Forest Service refused to sell them the trees because agency rules currently allow bidding only by "responsive purchasers" who intend to cut the trees.



mentalist roots. He railed against log exports and opposed weakening environmental laws. Running mate Al Gore was the Senate's greenest member. The volatile lumber market took the hint. One week before the 1992 election, a thousand board feet of softwood, the standard pricing unit, cost \$255; two weeks after, \$299. The price rose steadily over the next four months, until by April 1, the eve of the Forestry Conference, it sat at \$500—a new record.

The market, however, was in for a ride. Clinton owed his election to labor unions and Northwest Democrats, both of whom support logging. In fact, although Republicans received 74 percent, or \$1.7 million, of the industry's campaign dollars in the 1994 election cycle, the top House recipient was then-Speaker Tom Foley, a Washington State Democrat, who, like other western Democrats, found Clinton's anti-timber campaign rhetoric disconcerting and told him so. By the time Clinton got to the Portland timber summit, his reformist zeal was muted. Criticism of log exports vanished. The forests of eastern Washington, Foley's turf, were excluded from the summit agenda. The following week, as Clinton headed home to write the promised Northwest Forest plan, softwood prices began falling.

But industry hopes were quickly dashed. Clinton had promised to solve the Northwest timber crisis "scientifically," with something called "ecosystem management." This scheme, in brief, looks at all wildlife species in a given region, assesses their habitat needs, determines how much habitat remains un-logged, then decides how much, if any, logging may occur.

After fixing the Northwest timber crisis, White House officials wanted to use ecosystem management throughout the national forest system. Unfortunately, when Clinton's timber team actually looked at the Northwest's battered forests, the biggest federal harvest they could justify scientifically was 1.2 billion board feet—about half of what the White House expected and one quarter of the region's historic level. Environmentalists and some forestry scientists claimed that this figure was still too high; lawmakers and logging companies claimed that it was far too low. Lumber prices zoomed back toward \$500.

Predictably, White House officials spun this double dissatisfaction as proof of a successful compromise, but Clinton's forest plan did not, in fact, spread pain equally. The many smaller logging outfits that depend on national forests lost out when the federal harvest dropped. By contrast,

corporations with large private forest holdings made out like bandits, since any decline in federal volume crimped overall supply and boosted timber prices. Moreover, the compromise did little about the root of the forestry crisis: the federal timber program.

Fixing that mess was left to Jack Ward Thomas, a crackerjack Forest Service wildlife biologist who had led the design of ecosystem management and whom Clinton eventually appointed as Forest Service chief. It was arguably one of Clinton's worst appointments. Although smart and forceful, Thomas never meshed with agency brass who considered his ecosystem-management program treasonous and thus ensured that Thomas's plans to "reinvent" the Forest Service went nowhere. Time and again, White House officials watched as the new chief's subordinates buried his initiatives or end-ran him to Congress. Isolated, branded an environmentalist and a traitor, yet still deeply loyal to the agency he had served for twenty-seven years, Thomas set out to prove just how pro-timber he could be, promising Congressional committees repeatedly that new federal volume was on its way.

His promise proved hard to keep. Between harvest reductions in the Northwest and various anti-logging lawsuits elsewhere, federal timber sales in 1994 were the smallest since 1955. Republicans excoriated Clinton's forest policy as anti-business, anti-family, and anti-American. Western Democrats, fearing for their reelections, begged the administration to find new sources of timber. Thus, when record wildfires again swept the West in the summer of 1994—destroying 4 million acres and hundreds of homes and leaving dozens dead—the White House developed a keen and sudden interest in "saving" the public's forests from a "health crisis." That fall, administration officials revamped the Forest Service's existing salvage program, gave it a catchier title—the Western Forest Health Initiative—and began shopping it around Capitol Hill. This was the opening that industry lobbyists had been waiting for. In November, Republicans, riding the most openly anti-environmentalist platform in history, swept Congress, leaving key forestry committees in the hands of GOP timber-state lawmakers who were delighted to take Clinton's Forest Health initiative and run with it.

**A**mong those running fastest was North Carolina Congressman Charles Taylor. Although salvage was mostly a western issue, the eastern Republican was, by the loony standards of the 104th Congress, an ideal front man. A staunch supporter of more "property rights" and less government regulation, he was also a tree farmer, and routinely boasted about being the only "professional forester" in Congress. For all that professed

## FOR ALL THE GRIEF CLINTON GAVE REPUBLICANS, HE SHARED THE GOP'S ENTHUSIASM FOR SALVAGE LOGGING



expertise, however, Taylor's salvage bill (co-sponsored, it should be noted, by several western Democrats) reflected little interest in forestry science. Offered as a rider to the 1995 Emergency Supplemental and Rescissions Act—and assembled in such haste that parts arrived in committee in handwritten form—it directed the Forest Service to triple current salvage volumes over a two-year period. Then, in tacit recognition that no such quantities of legitimate salvage existed, the bill authorized the agency to sell not just dead or dying trees but any “associated” green trees, a wonderfully ambiguous term that effectively permitted any tree to qualify as “salvage.” And because this provision invited lawsuits, the bill suspended applicable environmental laws through 1996. In a final insult, even as supporters shamelessly touted salvage as a deficit reducer—claiming that it would net the Treasury up to \$1.5 billion—they inserted language ensuring that salvage sales would go forward even if “costs . . . are likely to exceed revenues.”

On July 27, to environmentalists' great dismay, Clinton signed the bill. He had previously vetoed it but finally was persuaded by advisers not to hold up budget talks over what was, for the administration, a second-string issue. To be fair, Republican negotiators had Clinton, then suffering some of his worst approval ratings, in a corner. But the fact remains that, for all the grief Clinton later gave Republicans over “their” salvage bill,<sup>7</sup> the White House always shared Republicans' enthusiasm for “forest health.” Administration officials saw salvage as a way around their earlier tough talk of “science-based” forestry policy, a means, under the auspices of an emergency, to find a few billion feet of hassle-free timber for noisy constituents out West.

In fact, all the salvage deal did was demonstrate just how poorly the administration grasped timber realities. Clinton issued a memorandum of agreement ordering the Forest Service to follow environmental laws when conducting salvage sales, but for many federal foresters, the prospect of new volume was too tempting. The agency ramped up huge temporary salvage programs in Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, Idaho, and the northern Rockies, prompting a wave of environmental complaints: salvage sales in ecologically sensitive areas; salvage sales with only a small

number of dead or dying trees; salvage sales containing no dead or dying trees; salvage sales that were really just prohibited “green” sales that had been relabeled “salvage.”

Among the more absurd instances was the so-called Thunderbolt sale in Idaho's Boise National



Forest. Logged so heavily forty years ago that an entire mountainside washed into the South Fork of the Salmon River, Thunderbolt had been withdrawn by the Forest Service as unsuitable for harvest. It was reopened for salvage in 1995, over the protests of federal fisheries scientists. “There are instances where salvage logging makes sense, where infestations are serious and are threatening to spread,” insists a high-ranking Forest Service biologist. “But make no mistake: in the context of the salvage rider, the ‘health crisis’ is bullshit. This is strictly about volume.” In any case, it was not about deficit reduction: a Congressional Research Service report showed that the Forest Service overestimated the selling price of salvage timber by nearly 100 percent; the two-year rider is estimated to have cost taxpayers up to \$233 million.

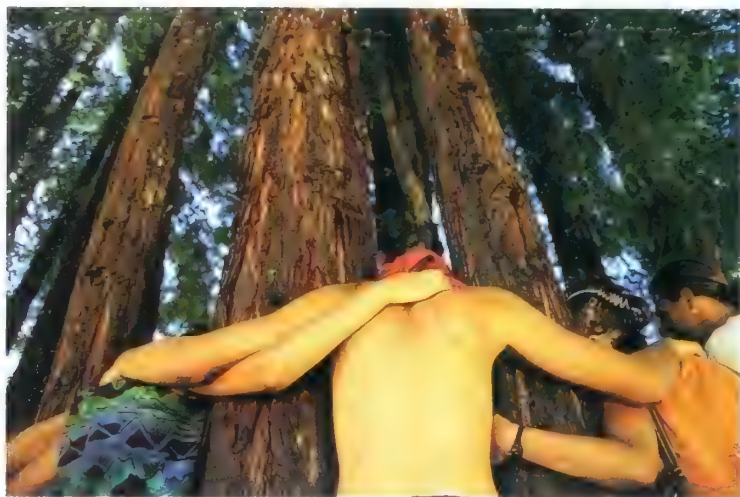
Privately, some administration officials conceded that the Forest Service was out of control on salvage. Yet for nearly a year, the White House maintained publicly that the Forest Service was properly conducting salvage sales and refused to take action. Even Clinton's orders to the Forest Service to behave turned out to be hollow: when environmentalists referred to the memo during a suit against salvage in Montana, Justice Department attorneys pointed out, correctly, that such memos do not carry the force of law.

What did carry the force of law, however, were

<sup>7</sup> White House officials have loudly charged that they were “snookered” by Republicans over a salvage-bill provision allowing harvest of previously protected old-growth trees. Although the provision was egregious—Republicans didn't even pretend that the high-value, healthy trees they were sending to Northwest loggers qualified as salvage—White House indignation was itself cover for the administration's support of salvage logging.



the agency's interests. The Forest Service arrested activists protesting West Coast harvests en masse. Agency officers cordoned off huge areas around each harvest site, ostensibly for safety reasons but, coincidentally, making it impossible for advocates—and the media—to see the logging. In some cases, agency officials even stopped bothering with appearances. On July 27, 1995, the day



the salvage rider was signed, arsonists torched 20,000 acres of the Gila National Forest in New Mexico. Firefighters on the ground complained that the agency provided little flame-retardant air support; agency planes were instead flying over the conflagration to map out a salvage sale. "It used to be 'Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires,'" says Oregon activist Tim Ingalsbee. "Now it's 'Light It, Log It.'"

A few months before last November's election, when some environmentalists still held out hope that the vote-anxious Clinton would make amends for the salvage debacle, I ride with Phil Nanas up to a protest camp near the Warner Creek fire. Arriving late in the day, we park, climb out of the truck, and clamber around a structure of logs and branches erected across the steep logging road. This "barrier"—the first of several that protesters have put up on the road—wouldn't slow a D-9 bulldozer for more than ten seconds. But by then, Nanas says, lookouts will have alerted the protest camp farther up the road, where the serious obstacles wait. To our left, the hillside falls off sharply into a valley of massive, dark-green trees. To the right, a clear-cut—a jumble of stumps, woody debris, and gorgeous rhododendrons—runs 2,000 feet up the slope.

We round a bend, and the camp itself comes into view, a ramshackle stockade of vertical logs and ropes and towers, emblazoned with a poster: *Cascadia Free State*. The environmentalist group

Earth First! built the camp in late 1995, after a federal judge, citing the salvage rider, opened a nearly sixteen-acre stand of 400-year-old trees to logging. (Fittingly, the Forest Service had awarded the salvage bid to Thomas Creek Lumber & Log, a company previously fined \$1.5 million for timber theft.) We walk over a drawbridge and into a dirt compound, where a group of men and women sit in a rough circle, preparing dinner. They look to be in their early twenties, with bright but soiled clothes, dirty fingers, and expressions of fatigue. Many have been here, off and on, for over six months and appear to spend much of their time like early hunter-gatherers. The press has not been kind to them. Most are unwilling at first to talk or even give me their name. One young woman, pretty even in her dank summer dress, consents to show me around the camp: a sleeping teepee, a cooking teepee, and, just upslope, the last best line of the protesters' defense—a standard-issue metal Forest Service gate fortified with concrete and designed so that protesters can handcuff themselves to it. In theory, law-enforcement officers will need hours with torches and shovels to open the gate, giving other protesters enough time to summon local TV reporters.

Despite the ingenuity of the device, I'm drawn more to the protesters themselves. Young, vulnerable, and almost comically grave, they belie the slacker image their generation has been assigned. Most have come considerable distances, a few from as far away as the East Coast, to participate in a grueling endeavor whose novelty must have worn off in a few weeks. For all their neo-countercultural trappings, these men and women show a dedication to, and interest in, the life of their country that is quite unfashionable. As we depart, passing a boy with blue hair struggling toward camp with water jugs, I realize that they are precisely the constituency that Bill Clinton would, at one time, have had little trouble attracting and keeping but whose first political experience, to quote one embittered activist, "is being fucked by a Democrat."

Indeed, environmentalists now join the growing line of supposedly core Democratic constituencies—from gays to the poor to labor—that Clinton has left swinging in the breeze, first through political misstep, then through political calculation, in a bait and switch that is by now recognizable as classic Clinton behavior. He excoriates extremist opponents, extols Nature's undefended virtues, even apologizes for earlier errors, then does virtually nothing to address the problem. Last June, for example, after Al Gore admitted that signing the salvage law was the administration's "biggest mistake," Clinton quietly declined to support a bill that would have repealed that "mistake"—a bill that subsequently lost by two votes. Later that summer, the administra-



on finally conceded "concerns" with the law's implementation—and ordered the Forest Service to stop selling live trees as salvage—yet proclaimed the salvage program "successful." In the spring of 1996, the administration had prepared a report detailing much more serious problems; it wasn't released until December, no doubt out of fear that bad forestry press might drive environmentalists over to Ralph Nader's Green Party.

He needn't have worried. Most voters who are even aware of "salvage" think it's a good thing, and those who think it's bad blame the Republicans. And the fact is, most voters don't spend much time contemplating any forestry issue—a condition that owes much to the media's unwillingness to get beyond pictures of spotted owls and irate loggers. A few weeks after I visited the Warner Creek protesters, the camp was raided by the Forest Service. A bulldozer leveled the concrete gate while officers rounded up a handful of dazed protesters, reportedly using pain holds to move particularly sedentary activists. Also arrested were a reporter and a photographer from the *Eugene Register Guard*; their notes and cameras were confiscated. The *Register Guard* sued the agency on constitutional grounds, and one would have thought, given that the press itself was a "victim," the incident would have received wider play. Yet outside the community of environmental journalists, the story was dead within twenty-four hours.

A few months later, Jack Ward Thomas resigned. The embattled Forest Service chief, who had come to Washington a hero and ended up as the administration's whipping boy for every timber ill, looked disgusted and tired. The White House insisted that the resignation was voluntary, but administration officials were clearly hopeful that his departure would set the stage for a fresh new timber policy.

And, indeed, this February, the administration announced some very reform-like measures: Clinton wants to cut logging-road funds, eliminate the salvage slush fund, restrict salvage logging to trees that are actually dead or dying, and even use "proscribed" fires to clear out fuel load. Unfortunately, such initiatives will collide with another kind of reform offered by congressional Republicans. In January, Idaho Senator Larry Craig unveiled a forestry bill that would boost federal logging and ease environmental restrictions. (By a strange coincidence, Craig's bill contained, almost word for word, twenty-three of the twenty-eight recommendations made last spring by lobbyists of the American Forest & Paper Association.) And in April, House Speaker Newt Gingrich himself applauded yet another "forest health" initiative by North Carolina's Charles Taylor that would, among other things, allow logging in federal forests that are currently off-limits.

Administration officials bashed Craig's bill, claiming that it would "sacrifice the integrity of God's creation at the altar of commercial timber production." But for all the righteous indignation and promises that are coming (once again) from Clinton, fundamental aspects of his timber policy remain unchanged. He still likes salvage. Some 1.4 billion board feet of wood—one third of the total Forest Service volume expected for 1997—will come from salvage logging operations. And over the next three months, as yet another summer's wildfires inevitably blacken the western landscape, proponents of salvage will demand more "emergency" measures. If recent history is any guide, as long as the Forest Service sees salvage as a source of budget dollars and sale receipts, it will continue to err on the side of more cutting—regardless of what would actually benefit the landscape. By 2005, the Forest Service, if it gets what it wants, will be "treating" 3 million acres of that landscape—about 5 percent of the agency's forest holdings—every year. At that rate, it will take only a decade to clear-cut, thin, or otherwise alter nearly half of the national forests.

In the Wenatchee National Forest, little has changed. The Pendleton sale is up for bid soon, though the Forest Service, after additional analysis, now wants loggers to remove the logs by helicopter rather than by truck. Helicopter logging is easier on the landscape than the traditional method. But it's far more expensive, which means that taxpayers, who theoretically own these trees, will lose even more money. The Forest Service, however, will still receive the lion's share of the sale receipts, which officials will use to plant trees, run operations, and plan future timber sales, thereby ensuring that the income stream continues.

From this standpoint, the hiker or hunter or even the logger who happens upon a splotch of blue paint on the Wenatchee or any other national forest can be forgiven a certain skepticism. In the end, the Clinton Administration did "reinvent" the federal timber program—or, rather, stood aside while the program reinvented itself, morphing from a logging bureaucracy into a "treatment" bureaucracy. Agency officials may have learned to avoid jarring, honest terms like "logging" in favor of the more politically correct "ecosystem management" and "stewardship." But in its effects on the ground, the new terminology looks amazingly like the old one. These days, to come across trees blazed by the stewards of our national forests is to follow the trail of money and governmental corruption through a landscape in its twilight. ■

## TODAY, TREES BLAZED BY THE STEWARDS OF OUR NATIONAL FORESTS SIGNIFY A TRAIL OF MONEY AND CORRUPTION



# TEN THOUSAND REVOLUTIONS

Through South America,  
in search of Che Guevara

By Patrick Symmes

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA,  
JANUARY 4, 1996

On the way down to the port, we drive behind the Casa Rosada, the presidential palace. The taxi is moving fast (in Buenos Aires, they all do), and I catch a sudden glimpse of a tiny crowd, some banners, and a cloud of smoke drifting through the air.

"Tear gas," the driver announces. "Roll up your window."

We barrel along toward the port, passing a dark green beast lumbering the other way up the avenue. It is an armored truck topped with a comically tiny spout for shooting water at the *delincuentes*. I ask my driver what cause has brought peaceful Argentina back to the brink of civil unrest.

"Well," he says, meditating for a moment while cutting off a bus. He looks in his mirror—at me.

"What day of the week is it?" he

*Patrick Symmes's last article for Harper's Magazine, "Taking the Measure of Castro, Ounce by Ounce," appeared in the January 1996 issue.*



asks. Thursday, I say. "Well," he says, "I think on Thursday it's the teachers."

The shipping agent has called: after three days my motorcycle has at last been located deep within a warehouse. I pay off the cabbie and follow a dock foreman who eventually and with great flourish presents me with a Honda chopper. Unfortunate-

ly, it is not mine. Mine is a BMW dirt bike. It takes only a few more hours to find it in yet another building behind some pallets of shrink-wrapped VCRs.

The saddlebags are still attached, which astonishes the foreman. Like every Argentine I have met, he takes his countrymen for thieves. Perhaps my luck is due only to the poverty of the enclosed possessions: a sleeping bag, a tent, and a copy of *The Motorcycle Diaries*, a road journal written long ago by that disinherited son of Argentina, Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Before he was famous as Fidel Castro's right-hand man, before he seeded revolutions across Latin America and appeared on a million North American dorm-room posters, the young Che

Guevara had set off to see the Americas by motorcycle. It was January 4, 1952, exactly forty-four years ago; he was just twenty-three. My plan is to retrace the journey described in his diary, going where he went, seeing what he saw.

Che changed Latin America because this trip changed him. Departing Buenos Aires an aristocratic rake,



he returned eight months later a revolutionary. His new credo traveled with him, first to Bolivia, then Guatemala, and eventually Mexico, where he joined forces with Fidel Castro. By the time Castro overthrew the Cuban government in 1959, Che was more than a master of guerrilla warfare; he was its guru. Tens of thousands of young men and women then followed either him or his example. They besieged Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, Nicaragua, and El Salvador with cycle after cycle of guerrilla assaults, each one met with brutal countermeasures by armies uniformed or secret and the whole process descending into the generation-long bloodbath that was Latin America in the '60s, '70s, and '80s.

Now, but for the clockwork motions of the If-it's-Thursday-then-they-must-be-teachers variety, the left has gone silent across the hemisphere, its old logic short-circuited by the end of the Cold War, its vocabulary inadequate to the challenge of NAFTA, GATT, and MERCOSUR, globalization, privatization, liberalization. The victory of free-market thinking is not without benefits or without costs. This morning's newspaper reports above the fold that stocks on the Argentine Bolsa are again climbing; below the fold an intrepid reporter has solved the mystery of Argentina's missing cats. As a rather gory photo shows, the children of the new shantytowns are roasting them for dinner.

Fertile ground for new revolutionaries once, but now the ground seems tired and produces only old ones: Che himself, missing for almost thirty years, has reportedly been traced to a small town in rural Bolivia. Back in 1967 he was killed there leading a

dismal guerrilla column and then stuffed into an anonymous grave sometime before dawn. Now, spurred by the confession of a military officer, a team of Argentine forensic experts has descended on Bolivia, trailed by some sixty journalists from all over

I could ride to Bolivia right now and be there before his bones are divided among the wolves, but I have arranged this trek not merely to see Che's body; I would understand something of his soul as well. And so I must approach Bolivia as he did, via Patagonia, Chile, and Peru. By the time I reach him, he may be gone.

I repack the saddlebags and kick the motorcycle to life. I turn left or right at random and throw the bike from side to side on the straightaways, re-learning its balance. After a while I look up and see I am in La Boca, the Brooklyn of Buenos Aires. Tough, working-class Italians live here, guarded against outsiders, believing only in the invincibility of the Boca soccer team and the divinity of Eva Duarte de Perón, she of haute couture and Andrew Lloyd Webber. She, too, has been exhumed a time or two, but it is always dangerous to tamper with old myths. Someone has spray-painted a message on the corrugated fencing of a construction sight: MADONNA PUTA.

DEPARTING BUENOS AIRES,  
JANUARY 6

At noon, 229 miles outside of Buenos Aires, I run the tank dry and coast to a stop at a blank spot on the map of the empty, flat pampas. Trees here are a sign of man, so I walk toward a distant clump and find a tattered

shack, careful to clap loudly, twice, as I approach. This is a gaucho greeting: on the enormous plain, being close enough to knock is considered rude. After a few minutes a sleepy, shirtless cowboy emerges, scratching himself and offering greetings in archaic, formal Spanish. We spend ten minutes ex-



the world. Che's imminent exhumation has sparked an absurd, necrophiliac dispute: the Argentines want his body brought here as a symbol of reconciliation with their lost son; the Cubans want Saint Che taken to Havana to breathe life into the dying revolution; the Bolivians want to keep him for the tourist revenues.



changing pleistocenes at pistol range before he leads me to mother shed in back, pushes aside enough tackle to outfit a cavalry regiment, and begins sucking mouthfuls of gasoline from the tank of his Ford Falcon. Sputtering away on this mixture of fuel and spit I am able to reach Miramar at sunset.

In 1952, Che stopped here to say good-bye to the life he was leaving—the relatives, friends, and most of all his beautiful girlfriend, María del Carmen “Chichina” Ferrera, an heiress from one of the most prominent families in Córdoba. Miramar was then an exclusive resort of the rich, a white city on the South Atlantic coast where people from “good family” idled away the summer in quiet splendor. Che spent eight days here, much of it necking with Chichina in her family’s car. “[I]n the great belly of the Buick,” he wrote with evident irony, “the bourgeois side of my universe was still under construction.”

But Chichina doesn’t come to Miramar much anymore. As with the rest of Argentina, an impoverished but striving middle class has taken over, thronging the white city with blaring radios and surfboards and stripping away the old elegance. To see her I must ride north, to Córdoba.

I find her waiting for me on the steps of Córdoba’s cathedral; she is in her sixties now and strikingly beautiful. For four hours she strides purposefully through her city, showing me old churches, interesting bookstores, chic cafés, art galleries, houses of the nobility, squares with elegant fountains, and plazas. She talks charmingly about religious art, the latest news from Washington, her life during the Dirty War, the cult of Evita Perón, economic globalization, the fate of Africa, the Internet, Cuba’s health-care system, Greenwich Village, the publishing industry, race relations in Peru—everything but Ernesto Guevara. She is unwilling to become a footnote to his story. I pry, though, and by the time we step into an old courtyard at the law school, a well-preserved gem of colonial architecture, I have clearly worn out her

courtesy. She begins to fume, and I can see that the tour is over.

We turn to leave and her step falters. Behind us, unseen as we walked in, is a huge portrait of Che, his scowling visage topped by the familiar red-starred beret. The students at the law school have been protesting something; it isn’t clear what. VENCEREMOS, the poster shouts—“We will win!”

Chichina stares for a moment at the face she once kissed, a myth she has been fleeing across a lifetime. She mutters something so quiet that I have to lean forward to hear her: “It’s just an icon that has nothing to do with him,” she says. She walks beneath the poster and into the dark passage that leads to the street. “They don’t even know who he was.”

SAN MARTIN DE LOS ANDES,  
ARGENTINA, FEBRUARY 4

Coming out of a Patagonian rainstorm into the lakeside town of San Martín, I have to thaw my fingers over a coffee-shop *cortado* before I can even flip through the local phone book, looking for a name that doesn’t exist.

Che’s diary mentions staying outside San Martín with a family of “very welcoming Germans” named Von Putnamer. The name isn’t listed here or in nearby towns. No doubt time will have wiped away much of Che’s trail.

The waiter sees me closing the book and asks who I am looking for. I give him the name.

“Puttkamer,” he corrects. “25250, I think.”

Oscar Von Puttkamer answers the phone on the first ring. “How soon can you come over?” he says. “I’ll tell you all about it.”

The Von Puttkamers were Prussian nobility in previous generations, and the estancia that Che mentioned was a suitably huge ranch where dozens of poorly paid *peones* labored to enrich the owners. Time, hyperinflation, and political chaos have changed things somewhat, and Oscar now lives on just a fraction of the old land, in a small, sturdy house that he built with his own hands. He has only

two *peones*—both of them ancient—who later admit to me privately that their boss is a fair man.

“I was only one or two when he was here,” Oscar says, sitting me down in front of a big plate of food. He doesn’t remember anything about the visit, naturally, but five years ago a friend told him of Che’s diary and the entry mentioning the “Von Putnamers.” I show him a passage that even mentions “one of the owner’s sons” who found the filthy and famished traveler “a bit odd.”

“Just think,” Oscar says with a great belly laugh, “Che Guevara probably looked into my crib!”

“Of course,” he says, the smile dying on his face, “I hate everything that son of a bitch did to us.”

Oscar begins ticking off the “Guevarist” guerrilla groups that began to appear in Argentina as early as 1961. The Uturunco, the Revolutionary Popular Army, the Montoneros—no matter how many times the army wiped out one cell another appeared, until bombs were roaring in the cities and policemen were gunned down routinely on street corners. Like most of the Argentines I’ve met, Oscar remembers this public madness better than the silent terror that followed the military coup of 1976, when secret death squads killed more than 10,000 Argentines. The great majority of the killing was done by the right, not the left, but Oscar can’t help blaming Che.

“He provoked the greatest national conflict in our history,” Oscar says. “Look at us now,” he adds, a remark explained only by his sad tone.

When the young Guevara peered into Oscar’s crib, revolution could not have been further from his mind. “Maybe one day when I’m tired of wandering, I’ll come back to Argentina and settle in the Andean lakes,” he wrote. He fantasized about commuting to his future medical practice in a helicopter. He wrote a self-mocking sketch of the *peones* rising for work in the early morning while he indolently sips his tea and spends the day trout fishing.

Later, rod in hand, I wade into the same river below the estancia that Che fished in. One by one the trout slip from their hidden lies beneath



he willow branches and hook themselves. I make a fire and eat under the stars.

FUTALEUFU, CHILE, FEBRUARY 6

**I** cross the Andes on a dirt road in the rain, clear customs, and push on toward the Carretera Austral, the only north-south road in these remote parts. This road is somewhat famous in Chile: it was pushed through the deep forests of the south allegedly on the personal orders of General Augusto Pinochet and is constantly cited as an example of his good works. Having overthrown Chile's elected president, Salvador Allende, in 1973, killed 3,000 of his own citizens, and ruled Chile despotically for seventeen years, the General needs all the credit he can get, I suppose. Unfortunately, the road proves to be the exact same mixture of mud and gravel as the roads that civilian governments build in South America. The only difference is that on the Carretera Austral, the bridges are named after military officers martyred at the hands of leftist guerrillas. Since the guerrillas were few and inept during Pinochet's rule, there are actually more bridges than officers, and thus even sergeants and a few privates end up honored.

I'm busy composing a metaphor about Chile as a land of holes in the ground, of anonymous graves and buried secrets, when I strike an actual hole in the General's road, fly first left and then right, and finally shoot sideways into the bush at thirty miles an hour, shattering the windscreen, snapping off various bits and pieces of the motorcycle, and cracking a rib.

Lying on the ground in the rain with the motorcycle on top of me, I hear a truck drive by. Five minutes later it comes slowly beeping backward down the road and stops. The driver ties a rope to the back of the truck, pulls the bike up the embankment, and we bang on various bent pieces with hammers until he has to hurry off. I stand in the middle of the road, in the rain, in the emptiest quarter of South America, surrounded by my broken and muddy possessions. He had crashed thirteen times by this point, but this knowl-



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edge is of no comfort. I press the starter button and the bike comes back to life. I go on.

**A**fter a few days the pain in my side has grown unbearable, and I am given shelter by an American millionaire. For his past sins as head of a retail-clothing empire, he has purchased an indulgence in the form of 700,000 acres of precious old-growth forest. The millionaire is going to give this land back to Chile as a national park, preserving it forever from the clear-cutting on which Santiago now depends for hard currency. For three days I recuperate in his compound at the end of an isolated fjord, surrounded by trackless wilderness. The buildings were made by local craftsmen, using local wood and local techniques. There are no phones or faxes, and everything is heated with wood stoves. The food is grown in a vast garden; the shellfish, taken from the fjord by area skin divers. The millionaire wears a sweater that was woven in the village across the fjord. For all this he pays handsomely—a way of assuring that the indigenous people can remain here, doing what they have always done. It is a form of modern leftism, top-down, money-driven, and entirely post-politics. The millionaire refers to this arrangement as “deep ecology.” The locals call it a miracle.

On my last night there some boats arrive bearing folk musicians from all over southern Chile, nearly one hundred of them, the finest and most traditional players in the land, all lured here with healthy paychecks to put on a grand concert in the airplane hangar. The audience consists of myself, the millionaire, his wife, and a few local boys who wander in, drawn by the thrumming of the generator in the darkness. At one point the millionaire stands up and gives a short and thoughtful speech in heavily accented Spanish on global economics. He stumbles a bit pronouncing *monocultivación*.

The next morning I sail down the fjord on a fishing smack with twenty

of the musicians, wondering whether Che would be an environmentalist by now. When we are out of sight of the compound, some of the players put on tiny headphones and start listening to rap music. They all say that the millionaire—whom they call *patrón*, or boss—is a wonderful man, the very best.

But still, one guitarist says as we lurch up the fjord on thick seas, he is being very stubborn about not buying a satellite dish and some TV sets.

CHUQUICAMATA, CHILE, MARCH 4

*We aren't all that broke, but explorers of our stature would rather die than pay for the bourgeois comfort of a hostel.*

—From Che's letter to his mother, July 6, 1952

**A**t last, a hero I can believe in. The young Che is a brilliant moocher, and in Chuquicamata I employ a routine he proudly describes in his diary for getting free food and drink. I talk my way into the local fire station, and soon I am entertaining the caretaker with stories of my world travels. Naturally, he provides a glass of Chilean red to accompany such talk, but I steadfastly refuse to touch it until he grows insulted. “Well,” I say, repeating Che's line, “no offense, but in my country we're not used to drinking without some food to wash it down.”

In no time at all the caretaker has whipped up a vast meal. And he throws in a free bed for the night. How well Che knew how to lead men.

In the morning I stand, slightly hungover, at the lip of the Chuquicamata copper mine. It is an astoundingly large hole in the desert, two miles long and a mile and a half wide, all of it dug out by the 10,000 men who have labored here over the course of the century. The pit has hardly changed since 1952—it was the largest open-pit mine in the world then, and still is—but the political terrain has shifted back and forth around it. When Che stood here the mine belonged to Anaconda, the Montana copper giant. The miners were paid a dismal wage and lived in dismal

conditions: collapsing shacks, no health care. In 1964 the mine was partly nationalized, and not by a Marxist like Salvador Allende but by President Eduardo Frei, a conservative. In his turn, Allende expanded state control and gave the miners a social contract unprecedented in Latin America: housing allowances, a subsidized canteen, free medical care, and guaranteed employment. Even the country's laissez-faire dictator, General Pinochet, was careful to preserve this public ownership of the means of production, which is why some Chileans called his economic policy “right-wing socialism.”

Now President Frei—that is, the son of the earlier President Frei—is talking about “efficiency” and “new times” for Chile, which the miners interpret to mean selling the mine back to the gringos. The men Che called the “blond, efficient, arrogant managers” are already back in the desert: Australian, South African, and American firms are operating a new, highly automated mine not far from here.

At the lip of the pit, I approach the only miner in sight, a short fellow in a dusty orange jumpsuit and a blue hard hat. He is staring at a suitcase at his feet from which two wires run to a disk resembling an upside-down dinner plate. “He pe ese,” he says: GPS, the Global Positioning System. He works for the mine's surveying office, which tracks on a daily basis the constantly changing shape of the hole. He is testing the new GPS system, and if it works the surveying office will be reduced from ten men to five. “They will find a job for me somewhere else,” he says, probably with one of the private subcontractors the mine is relying on more and more to cut costs. The miners are keenly aware of the ground shifting under their feet. This fellow looks over the hole and discourses on globalization, added-value production, and the price of Indonesian copper.

There is a great cloud of dust over the digging operations to the left, which are close to some buildings that he points out. “*El pueblo Americano*,” he says. The American town. It is the former residence of the Anaconda engineers, a village of



ne New England-style clapboard ouses. The digging, he notes, must follow the copper vein wherever it oes, and right now that is toward he American town. It will take ears to cover the last few hundred ards, according to the surveyors' alculations, but eventually the iron uler of profit means that the copper ust be taken out and the town ust fall.

"In 2005," the miner says, "pfft." And he undercuts the clapboard vil-age with a sudden slice of his hand.

CHACALUTA, CHILE, MARCH 9

**H**our after hour I follow smooth blacktop through the desert, a waste-and interrupted only by the occasional roadside warehouse or the distant ruins of old mining camps. I leave the pavement twice to bounce over the packed soil and investigate these wrecks. The first is a small town of collapsing huts surrounded by barbed wire, and my engine rouses the caretaker from a drunken slumber. This place, he explains, was a concentration camp during the 1970s, and one can still find graffiti left on the barracks walls by imprisoned Allende aides.

The other ruin proves to be a lonely cemetery. A sign identifies it as the Rica Aventura nitrate mine. Rich Adventure: the name rings a bell, and digging in Guevara's diary I find a brief note that he spent a couple of nights here, observing some of the same miners now buried in front of me. Since even plastic flowers wilt in this heat, the tombs are decorated only with scraps of iron—wreaths made from barrel hoops, metal flowers blooming with rust, vines of barbed wire. The whole boneyard rattles in the wind like an untuned orchestra.

Back on the road, three more hours of emptiness and then what seems at first a mirage: a lone figure walking by the side of the road in a dust storm. But he is real: a sun-burned madman patrolling the desert with ten liters of water in his backpack. For twenty minutes I tape-record him babbling about Masonic conspiracies, the secret languages of mountains and trees,

and other nonsense. I give him some bread.

"In Chile, there are only two kinds of people," he says by way of thanks. "The innocent and the living."

LIMA, PERU, MARCH 20

**I** wake up late and hungry, find some carryout, and as I'm walking back to my hotel I pass in front of the Palestinian Consulate. A pair of pudgy policemen jump out of the bushes and demand that I surrender the dangerous parcel bomb I'm car-

rying. They argue about who should open it and settle on me. I untie the ominous string, unwrap the suspicious brown paper, and open the disturbing cardboard box. We all look at the three empanadas inside. "One chicken, two beef," I say.

But I am grateful for their care. There are two guerrilla groups in Peru, and both of them mix bombs with diplomats. The more deadly of the two is the infamous Shining Path, unique among Latin guerrillas in that it despises Che as just another "revisionist dog" like Fidel Castro or

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Leonid Brezhnev. The Shining Path are Maoists, cold killers who use machetes in highland villages and car bombs in urban areas. Their rivals, the MRTA, are a more traditional group—what the academics call “Guevarist” in orientation. They worship Cuba and try to kill mostly soldiers and policemen. It is the MRTA, of course, who will in a few months take more than 400 hostages during a party at the Japanese ambassador’s residence. Such sieges were once standard in Latin America and often were followed by terrifying massacres (at the Colombian Palace of Justice, 1985) or large ransoms (at the Nicaraguan National Palace, 1978). Yet the party raid will be different from the moment MRTA guerrillas slip inside disguised as waiters carrying canapés. The inevitable commando assault will follow a truly postmodern siege in which the guerrillas watch soap operas and release statements via their Web page while the hostages hold self-improvement seminars on topics such as the benefits of kidnapping insurance. A pollster—himself a captive—will be allowed to survey his fellow hostages and publish the results: surprisingly, only 87 percent of those held on the first floor will feel that security at the party was “inadequate.” In the end, the inept guerrillas will be playing a game of indoor soccer when Peruvian commandos finally burst in and kill them all.

No wonder they still can’t locate Che’s body in the Bolivian mud. Perhaps he is too embarrassed to be found.

LIMA, MARCH 28

**I** ride up the Avenida de Garcilaso de la Vega into the city’s choked and choking center. Weaving among the stalled traffic, I slip past the *colectivo* taxis and their “door boys” shouting destinations; past the inevitable Volkswagen Beetles spewing black smoke, the inescapable taste of Lima; past the teenage soldiers with Galil rifles clouding the sidewalks around important buildings; past the vendors who flood the intersections selling lottery tickets, cigarettes, gum, windshield wipers (I no longer have a

windshield to wipe), key chains, old magazines, statuettes of Jesus Christ, and soccer balls.

In 1952 Lima was still the “city of the viceroys,” as Che called it. The old city center was Spanish in appearance and manner, “the perfect example of a Peru which has never emerged from its feudal, colonial state. It is still waiting for the blood of a truly liberating revolution.”

The R word at last. Che believed that a revolution would be “truly liberating,” but I can’t say that the bloodshed so far has done Peru any good. The old Lima has indeed been replaced, but by a new order that swings into view once I pass the presidential palace and ride up onto the bridge over the filthy Río Rímac: shantytowns as far as the eye can see. They are filled with the poor who have been driven from their old lives by innumerable revolutionaries, by drug traffickers, by army massacres, by the globalization of agriculture and the lure of city lights. For forty years they have flooded down from the hills, an army of peasant millions, surrounding Che’s city of viceroys with a belt of shabby homes, each wave of migrants climbing higher up the stony hills until the old Lima lives surrounded by the sullen gaze of its mestizo bastards.

Navigating these “New Towns” is impossible for a stranger. There are few landmarks and fewer street signs, so I follow vague instructions like “go past the tower” and “left in five minutes” and “look for the restaurant” until, after half an hour of circling, I find the leper colony. The gate is open and I drive straight in, kill the engine, dismount, and am immediately overwhelmed by children.

Their questions, in order:

“Is it true in your country you can rent Nintendo games?”

“What kind of cargo do you carry?”

“Is America the last country?”

“Would you like to see where Che Guevara lived?”

Before Che ever conceived of world revolution, he believed in the untouchables. In medical school he developed an interest in leprosy, and in Peru he visited three leper colonies, including this one. In those

days the lepers were forced to live here. Now, although the walls remain, the gate is open and the only lepers still living here are the twenty or so who chose to stay. They get medical care, some food, and crude houses that are nonetheless far superior to the shanties outside the walls.

Che noted that one of the most powerful treatments for leprosy was firm handshake: when he sat with the lepers, took their hands confidently, played soccer and ate with them, they saw that he had no fear. “This may seem pointless bravado,” Che wrote to his father, “but the psychological benefit to these poor people—usually treated like animals—of being treated as normal human beings is incalculable . . .”

I’m not Che. The first adult I meet is named Serafino, and when we shake hands I blanch visibly at his thumbless grip. Like many lepers, Serafino has a slightly “crazy” expression, the result of nerve degeneration in his face. Even in Che’s day there were medicines to arrest the disease, but poverty is its own illness, and Serafino grew up untreated. Born sometime in the 1950s—he doesn’t know when—he was exiled to his first leper colony in 1967.

Serafino raises fighting cocks and corn and Chinese onions, all of which he shows me. He wasn’t here in 1952, of course, but Che is a vast myth in Latin America, and lepers have their own channels of communication. While irrigating his corn, Serafino tells me that Che “lived here for about two or three months.” In the daytime he worked in the laboratory inventing new treatments, and at night he went into the city and organized his groups. Eventually, Serafino explains, Che launched his world revolution in Peru, was defeated in battle, and fled to his death in Bolivia.

Every detail of this story is wrong—Che was here a couple of weeks, he spent his days touring museums, he wasn’t a guerrilla then, and he never fought in Peru—but in the minds of Serafino and millions of the dispossessed the story is entirely true. Across the continent there are a hundred such tales, and the poor



always as powerful as it is simple: he lived and died for us.

Serafino shows me the little blue sack where Che supposedly lived. There was a photo of him on the wall inside for many years, but they had to take it down in the 1970s. Yes, I say sympathetically, it wasn't safe to keep a photo of Che during those reactionary times.

"No," Serafino says, "they had to paint the place."

On the way back to my motorbike notice, gleaming up on a hillside in neon splendor, a statue of Jesus looking down upon the city.

LIMA TO CUZCO, PERU,  
MARCH 31-APRIL 9

Up into the Andes, the poison of Lima dropping behind as I climb from sea level to 8,000 feet in ninety minutes and then stop at a police post to adjust my wheezing carburetor. The policemen ask about the spike, about where I have been and where I am going. They talk about how nice it would be to drive a motorcycle across America one day, and nod, hating these moments. We all know that they will live in these cold mountains for the rest of their lives. Only a few nations are allowed to dream.

Climbing another hour I top the road at 15,400 feet and enter the rugged altiplano that will carry me down the spine of the Andes and into Bolivia. Days crawl by in a series of miserable and precious moments: driving through a snowstorm without gloves, fording seven rivers in a single day, a "highway" that loses its pavement and eventually its sanity in ever narrower twists, a landslide that erases the road from a cliff face for thirty-six hours, a band of peasant pilgrims who take me for a priest and begin kissing my hands (having lost my modesty a thousand miles back, I bless them gladly and send them on their way), soldiers looking for "a few bandits" just ahead, peasant dancers in blue-eyed masks reenacting the Conquest for fifty drunken Indians and one suddenly nervous blue-eyed boy, and always the precious gasoline spooned into my dry tank with coffee cans.

Ten days later I touch pavement again in Cuzco. Che wrote pages about the "impalpable dust of other ages that covers" the city, but now the ancient capital of the Incas is a tourist trap. Suddenly I am surrounded by Gore-Tex, guitar-playing hippies, and beautiful French-Canadian girls. I have a kind of nervous breakdown while eating pizza in a 500-year-old palace and have to lie down for a day. Possibly this is altitude sickness.

CUZCO, APRIL 11

This place is crawling with guerrillas, but they've all retired. I spend a morning in the office of a municipal bureaucrat who admits vaguely to having been "in the movement" during the 1960s. At one point he stands behind his desk, thundering out memorized sections of Che's famous 1961 speech in Uruguay.

"He was a symbol," the man says, slumping into his chair again to catch the breath he has lost over the last thirty years, "a symbol of a new type of leader, of a new era. He wasn't a bureaucrat or a union leader or a politician"—three terms that could describe this man himself—"but a romantic type. He crossed from country to country, traveling by foot or horse or motorcycle like you, getting to know all of Latin America."

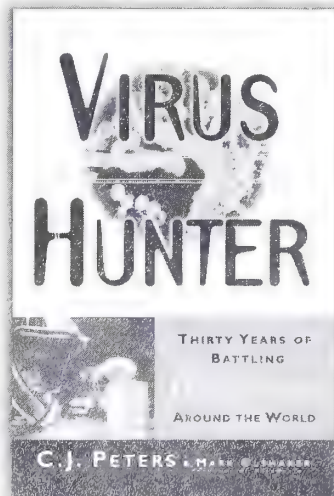
In a coffee shop, another aged guerrilla tells me about training under Che in Cuba in 1961. He flips over the syllabus of the economics course he now teaches and draws a crude sketch of Latin America. Working fast, he begins filling the map with the span of guerrilla history: the years and locations (Cuba 1959, Peru 1963/65, Bolivia 1967), the forgotten acronyms (NOL, ELN, MTR, JPC, COB, MIR, MNR), the names of fallen leaders (El Che, Mario Monje, Hugo Blanco). He draws arrows slicing along the paths of influence, the lines of escape, the clandestine missions. After thirty minutes, the outline of the continent itself is obscured by this spirograph of failed revolutions, and at last he pauses. He says nothing for a while, rapping the pen furiously



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against the public, a dumbbell of disillusion, death, disaster.

"We failed," he says. "He sent us. We failed."

"We were young," he says.

LA PAZ, APRIL 22

The transport workers are on strike, and they plan to shut down La Paz to emphasize their demands for higher wages. They've asked the poor of the city to descend from the surrounding hillsides and join the demonstrations. All morning the breeze has carried a faint whiff of pepper gas and distant "pops" that sound like shotguns.

I follow the sound of cheering down an alley until I see twenty-odd men hiding behind the corner of the old San Francisco Cathedral. They are giggling and watching nearly a hundred policemen in motorcycle helmets strolling down the big avenue. The giggling intensifies, and finally the men step into sight, twice chant, "The people united/will never be defeated," and then start running past me. The riot policemen come steaming up the alley after them, the shopkeepers slam their doors shut—this is obviously a practiced routine—and gas canisters arc gracefully overhead in pursuit of the escaping *delinquentes*. I spend a few minutes rolling around on the cobblestones, choking and crying, my eyes welded shut, listening to the dull crump of the gas grenades and the crisp reports of the shotguns.

More giggling, though this time it is the riot policemen who are laughing at their out-of-shape sergeant huffing to catch up with them. By the time I can breathe again, both sides have vanished, and little boys are scampering around the alley collecting Winchester 12-gauge casings, marveling over the bright green plastic and sniffing at the lingering cordite.

LA PAZ, APRIL 22

In the morning, small items in the newspapers report that the transport workers failed to block a single avenue, let alone shut down the city. At first light I drive up and out of

the city, passing beneath a series of bridges and overhead walkways. They are already lined with blue, green, and gray uniforms, shotguns, rifles, pepper-gas guns. Dawn at 10,000 feet is cold, and the men are blowing on their fingers and stamping their feet, waiting for the game to begin again. I roll south all day, toward Che's burial ground.

SOMEWHERE NEAR MATARAL,  
BOLIVIA, APRIL 22

The first, second, third, fourth, and fifth flat tires of my journey. A displaced spoke is to blame. I spend a night on a mountainside lying in a field of quinoa. I wake up covered with ice.

LA HIGUERA, BOLIVIA, APRIL 25

Yesterday I spoke on a provincial radio station about the purpose of my trip, my itinerary, and my frank opinion of Che's guerrilla tactics here in Bolivia. Today I am bouncing over a dirt road toward La Higuera, the tiny village where Che died, and when I get to the sole intervening town I find the schoolteacher, the mayor, and the postmaster standing in the square waiting for me. They are one man.

"First of all," he says, "take this letter up to La Higuera." He hands me the weekly mail run. "Second of all, I heard what you said on the radio about Che, and you're wrong." We spend half an hour in his office, drinking moonshine and debating socialism, the New Man, and Che's mountain-guerrilla-base strategy. I used to never drink and ride.

I'm hardly down the road when an old man in a straw hat flags me down. "You must be the gringo on the radio," he shouts toothlessly. "I talked to Che Guevara right on this spot thirty years ago!" We chat; I promise to eat dinner with him on my way back this evening. I never see him again.

Onward, riding ridge lines through country without a line of smoke or a visible house. In 1966, at the height of his reputation as the prince of guerrillas, Che calculated that this desolate, empty quarter of Bolivia was the perfect place to

launch his world revolution—brutally poor, inaccessible to conventional troops, ideal for guerrilla and bushes. Reality proved the reverse. Che's band of Cuban army officer and Andean intellectuals wandered aimlessly through the countryside, lost and hungry, while the army picked them off one by one over the course of eleven months. The peasants constantly betrayed them, and eventually Che and a few survivors were trapped in a ravine right below this road. Badly wounded, the rifle literally shot out of his hands, Che was captured, taken to La Higuera, and executed.

There are only twenty-two families in this desperate village. Many of them ratted on Che to the army, but the Cuban government has forgiven them and sent a doctor to work here in Che's honor. I interview this man as he pulls teeth from an old woman's mouth and rhapsodizes about *la guerrillero heroico*. Then I deliver the mail and leave for Vallegrande, the provincial capital where twenty-nine years ago Che's corpse was taken for public display.

About three kilometers outside La Higuera I see Che himself striding down the road and pull over to give him a ride. The fellow's real name is Jans van Zwam, and he is a fortyish Dutch tourist who has killed himself out to look as much like Che as possible: a black beret with red star, a Che T-shirt, a near (though red) Che beard. He even has a tattoo of a fiercely defiant Che on his left arm.

"For twenty years I dream of coming to Bolivia," he says. He has passed through four airports in thirty-six hours, landed in southern Bolivia, jumped in a taxi, and come straight to La Higuera—where, by his own account, he burst into tears. Like all Che fans, Jans explains the man's greatness with a personal parable. "I didn't have no education," he says from behind me as we roll along. "At fourteen I am going to work. After much time I pick up a book. It is about Che Guevara. I see he is a doctor, from good family. He have everything, he could be a good life, but he give it up to fight



or the poor. So I think he is a good fellow, and I read another book." End of parable.

Between navigating and listening to Jans talk about the various designs he considered for his Che tattoo, I miss a true milestone: somewhere on this stretch I complete the ten thousandth revolution of my odometer since leaving Buenos Aires.

At dusk we strike the outskirts of Vallegrande and stop at the hospital shed where Che's body was put on display twenty-nine years ago. Jans unsheathes an enormous knife and carves his name and, in Dutch, a message—YOU ARE MY LIGHT—on the wall among hundreds of similar messages of devotion left by tourists from all over Latin America. As dusk deepens, we ride down to the airfield to look at the excavation.

They never did find Che's body. The retired army officers pointed, the forensic scientists dug, the journalists watched, but day after day the shoveling produced nothing. The search expanded, old peasants were interviewed, ground-imaging radar was brought in to scan the dirt, and eventually even a bulldozer went to work. After a few weeks the journalists went home. After three months, the Argentine excavators went broke.

Beneath the planets and stars of the blue night, the only signs of this fantasy are the coffin holes scattered around the field. Jans peers into several of them, takes some pictures, then bursts into tears again.

I'm speechless, road sick, uncompassed by this moment of arrival. Ten thousand miles is a long way to come to see emptiness. There never was any revolution here, not the kind Che believed in. From Argentina to Mexico, there were so very many attempts and so very many, very costly failures, until the earth swallowed up all the ideals, all the blood, all the bodies.

Like La Higuera with its doctor, though, Vallegrande did get one inadvertent benefit from Che's efforts. Because of tourists like Jans, the government decided some time ago to install electricity. Up on the hillside now, the town glows in the night, basking in its privilege of light amid so much darkness.

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# WHILE WATTS BURNED

Remembering a riot and a boy's fear

By Don Wallace

**W**e'd barely pitched our tents at summer camp—an annual gathering of Boy Scout troops on the slopes of the San Bernardino Mountains, high above the steaming City of Angels—when we began to behave like the boys in *Lord of the Flies*. We teased the shy and fearful, ran amok at night, and mocked our Eagle Scout leaders, those feathered and beaded braves who danced *hey-na-na* in buckskin G-strings around ceremonial campfires.

We were so bad we were beginning to scare ourselves. I know I was frightened when I found myself captive, tied up, lashed to a resinous pine by two brothers, Vaughn and John, who'd improved their forest-green Scout uniforms with swastikas of black electrician's tape. Sons of a chapter head of the John Birch Society, the



brothers were teenaged chips off the old block, forever spouting white supremacist slogans and saying things like "Hitler was right." In 1965 southern California, such views, while considered indelicate, were not enough to warrant expulsion or even censure from the Scouts.

I'd hated those brothers ever since a Joshua Tree campout during which they'd broken into some desert rat's home, stolen his cache of naturalist magazines, and then, when the theft was discovered, tried to pin the crime on me, who had merely come into the possession of a single issue of "art studies." But I also envied them: their father, I was known, had a weapon collection that included rifles, shotguns, and a Mause machine pistol, and the boy got to shoot everything. As the son of an Annapoli graduate gone inexplicably soft on guns, I had spent fruitless years nudging my dad's conscience with National Rifle Association membership forms, *Boys' Life* articles on "Your Son's First Gun," and lists of friends whose fathers weren't too busy to take them shooting. But Dad was the pious sort of father who could ignore the fact that he'd gotten to blow away on the range with a .45 auto

Don Wallace is the author of *Hot Water*, novel. He lives in New York City.



atic, not to mention commanding battery of 12-inch guns on a battleship, as if simply saying that he no longer "liked" guns was sufficient excuse.

Vaughn and John shuffled up behind me, one on each side, like altar boys, and a black strip of tape was looped around my head and cinched tight over my lower lip, baring my teeth. Then a second piece was secured across the bridge of my nose, and I had a cold premonition of being X'd out, strand by strand.

A gust of wind bent the pines, moaning through the massed needles, and I looked unblinking at a trip of black approaching directly toward my eyes like a horizon rushing to greet me. The moan of the wind changed key, became a chord. The chord swelled majestically into wailing of what sounded like horns. The black horizon wavered. Now the horns were distinct, a discordant multitude merging into a great throne. The brothers murmured to each other. I heard them picking up their things. Their steps crunched on sandstone, and—an afterthought—the rope at my back slackened.

Wiggling myself free, stripping off the tape, I staggered back to camp in time to join an anxious throng staring down the narrow black-topped road. Still blaring, a stately procession of station wagons breasted the hill, radiators steaming in the height of summer's heat. Chevrolets, Fords, Buicks—wood-paneled, bright chrome grilles big as surfboards—all station wagons, and all empty, except for the dad at each wheel.

The cars pulled over, and the fathers marched straight to Klaus "the Kraut" Foster's tent. Our Scoutmaster staggered out, still buttoning up his shirt from a midday snooze. We watched, lip-reading. Rumors spread fast, like a dry Santa Ana: war, assassination, invasion, Foster's dismissal.

Foster mounted a picnic table and waved for quiet. "Listen up," he growled. The camp was closing. We were going home in the station wagons. Suddenly I wanted to know where my father was, and why he hadn't come. The situation seemed

uncomfortably close to one he and my mother often discussed, with us children in the audience: how, when the Communists took over, children would be separated and sent to live apart, girls to work in beet fields, boys in pig-iron foundries.

The forest went utterly still, as if we'd all drawn in our breath, creating a momentary vacuum.

"The reason for this—this situation—is because of something, some trouble, back home. Not at *your* home," Foster corrected himself, with a quick peek at the row of fathers. One of them gave a slight nod.

Foster chopped down with his right hand. "Not at home, but in a place—someplace in the South. Georgia, Mississippi. They started it down there. They've called in the National Guard. To stop the Negroes, who are burning this place down. Burning Watts."

"—Georgia," interjected a father, loudly.

"Affirmative. Watts, Georgia," said Foster. He folded his clammy white hands over his khaki shirt and stared up into the midday sky. He cleared his throat. "Let us join hands for the Scout Prayer." As usual, Foster didn't open his eyes to see if we were actually holding hands. We weren't. But the row of fathers couldn't help but see, if they cared to. This made me nervous, until I realized that they weren't holding hands either.

"And now, may the Great Father of All Scouts be with us till we meet again. *Wo-he-lo*." Foster opened his eyes warily.

The boys began to surge forward, carrying me with them.

"Wait!" Foster cried out. "Wait till I call your names!"

Soon I found myself in a crowded station wagon driven by somebody's father. As we made our way down the San Bernardino Mountains into the yellow foothills, our tires squealed on every hairpin curve, and the dad deflected our questions and refused to allow us to play the radio. We couldn't figure out why he was so tense if the trouble was in Georgia, light-years away. We treated the drive up to the sleepy town of Corona, and the pass

over the hills to the Los Angeles Basin, arguing and pushing for space, forgetting in our candy-bar-induced daze that we were fleeing camp for a reason, and a mysterious one at that.

Then we topped the ridge. The dad kept driving, kept his eyes on the road. By the time we had looked at the horizon ahead and then back at him, there was nothing he could say that would lessen the impact of this, not after telling us not to worry for the past two hours. The sight—dense black pillars of smoke rising from the center of the horizon—silenced all of us for a moment. But we were boys: we had to talk. Someone noted the drivers of the other cars on the freeway, how grim they were and how they ignored the speed limit, racing past and rocking us in their wakes.

"Boys," the dad said. "Listen up." He took a deep breath as if knowing he had to give the speech of a lifetime. We were not a friendly audience, we knew what it was like to be lied to: it was only two years ago that they'd said Kennedy was unhurt, then only wounded.

"It's like they went crazy." He sighed. "We'll be home soon." And then he switched on the radio.

*—exploding violence flaring bullets loading you're old enough to kill but not for voting—*

And he switched it off.

"I can't believe anybody listens to that garbage."

"But it's 'Eve of Destruction,'" one of us protested. Someone added laconically, "It's really cool."

That shut the dad up, probably even scared him. Approaching from the east, we skirted the mysterious smoky center of Los Angeles as convoys of police cars and fire trucks ripped down the fast lane every five minutes or so, overtaking us in a wail of sirens. As we neared the outskirts of Long Beach, a black and white patrol car pulled alongside our little wagon train. The unsmiling officer eyeballed us, then accelerated to the next car to do the same. "Checking for outside agitators," our driver told us.

At home we found my father standing before the television in the





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Photograph by Franco Salmoiraghi

den. My mother and two sisters were on the sofa, mesmerized by herky-jerky images: firemen dragging hoses, sprays of water, flaming buildings, sweaty faces. "Somebody's house is burning," my little sister said. Time passed, and my family and the newscasters took turns filling me in about the man arrested for drunken driving, his mother screaming at the police to stop beating her son, the crowd gathering, the mother arrested, the first bottle thrown. Tear gas was lobbed into the crowd in return. Molotov cocktails answered the tear gas, and shots were fired by the police. Last night the violence had moved to the sniper phase, and roving bands had set fires from Watts to Compton, a distance of a hundred blocks, much of it along Atlantic Avenue.

We had just moved to a larger house on a corner lot. The nearest big street, two blocks away: Atlantic Avenue. The next town north: Compton. South of our house, in the heart of Long Beach, also clustered around Atlantic Avenue, was our own ghetto, twenty blocks away.

My brother, Alex, and I were more thrilled than scared when Dad said he thought "they" would come tonight. In the manner of children everywhere, we craved participation in the dangerous games of history. On that hot August afternoon in 1965, we were definitely ready for the apocalypse. For me, gunless and throbbing for the consummation of fantasy and reality, the prospect of a pitched battle among the suburban lawns of Long Beach seemed like a gift from boy heaven.

The phone rang. My mother left to answer it, then returned to beckon for Dad, who went out.

Mom stared into our expectant faces. "Mrs. Jennings is trapped in the projects," she said. "Fires are breaking out all around her."

Mrs. Jennings was our baby-sitter, a strong-willed, canny sergeant-major in a Blue Willow housedress. An Elizabeth—just like my mother—Mrs. Jennings had assisted greatly in raising us children, freeing the other Elizabeth to maneuver her way up through the ranks of the Girl Scouts, PTA, Junior League, and the DAR.

With her ship-worker son, she'd just moved to a small house in South-Central Los Angeles, but with the Wallace kids shuttling in and out of sleep-away camps all summer, she'd had to pick up work in the nearby projects. And now there were flames visible from outside her window, and she was afraid.

Of course we felt responsible.

"Can't the police . . . ?" asked my mother.

"Their hands are full." Dad turned to Alex. "We'll take the Buick."

I stood up and edged in close to my brother, intending to ride his slipstream out the door if necessary.

But my father said nothing against my presence. In fact, my older sister, Anne, was also given permission to come along, in keeping with her status as the family's best athlete. To my intense anguish, at her just completed summer camp in the Sierras she had earned a marksman's medal with a .22, something I suspected I would never do.

We set out in the blue Buick, symbol of solidity, a cruiser of automobiles. My father, ex-lieutenant of the USS *Columbus*, wore his light blue Navy trousers, his windbreaker, and even, as I recall, his officer's cap with the gold scrambled eggs above the bill. It was a cap for boating and for certain manly tasks such as visiting the great flaming garbage dump in the hills. Certainly, given his penchant for strategizing, I could well imagine his deciding on a military appearance on this day, a Navy man's instinct for impressing the indigenous population.

We drove down Atlantic ten blocks to the San Diego Freeway, rode that for a half-mile north to the Harbor Freeway, L.A.'s femoral artery. Driving straight toward smoke pillars that seemed to be holding up an opalescent ceiling scorched by fire, we found ourselves alone for giant stretches on the white pavement, an event almost unprecedented in daylight hours. From our elevated roadway we could see all around us calm traffic, houses, brown strips of flood control, pumping oil wells; the flashing lights and feverish activity at an intersection would catch on



yes, but we'd be going too fast to see what it was.

As the first pillar of smoke came so close for comfort, oily and wet-tool-smelling, a police car rocketed past, traveling without lights or siren. "Must be going a hundred miles an hour," said my father.

Now on this underpopulated roadway there loomed a traffic slowdown. Five or six cars were traveling in a pack, keeping their distance from two cars, older, jacked-up Chevies, that wove back and forth in front, crossing lanes with a lazy freedom that was both mesmerizing and hocking. "Probably drunk or lopped-up," pronounced Dad.

Slowing down to little more than a crawl, we heaped scorn on the timid drivers ahead of us. Finally, Dad laid back from the pack, then floored the accelerator, taking an inside curve and riding right up on the shoulder, past the herd of cowed commuters, roaring through the gap before the blockading team knew we were upon them.

We sailed down the freeway, laughing. Returning to a respectable sixty-five, we began to count exits to the one where Mrs. Jennings would be waiting beside her window, the phone in her hand and the line open to our house back in Long Beach.

"GET DOWN!" thundered Dad.

We turned to see the two Chevies bearing down on us.

"Down on the floor," snapped Dad. We obeyed smartly. After a moment I heard the blatting of a glass-packed muffler approaching on my left. It blew even. "Stay down," said Dad. At least a minute passed: now two mufflers muttered alongside us. Slowly, as if by common agreement—but really because we couldn't help ourselves—the three of us children raised up and peered out the window.

We found ourselves staring at a carload of black men, their jaws jutting toward us out of the open windows with an air of deliberate menace. Their eyes were slits, their expressions closed in a fierce implacability; they were shirtless, and they wore porkpie hats. Even their jacked-up, steeply raked car conveyed a threat. My father, meanwhile, was leaning back in his seat,

left arm resting on the open window, right hand on the wheel, his cap tilted back on his head: a sailor out for a Sunday drive.

What did the black men think of us? I can only conjure up a surreal Norman Rockwell painting of the freckled, pigtailed girl, the two wide-eyed boys, the deliberately insouciant father with a whistle on his lips, blithely sailing, somehow disarming these wrathful, desperate rebels.

"I'm keeping my hands in sight so they won't think I have a gun," Dad said in a conversational tone. "I'm not making eye contact. Giving them an excuse to cut and run without losing face. Making it nice and easy."

The men shot us a last blazing glare as their car sped up and pulled ahead, then suddenly sharked across our bow and down an exit ramp in one smooth move, thrashing a tail of dark exhaust behind it.

After that, picking up Mrs. Jennings was anticlimactic, especially when the projects where she'd been baby-sitting turned out to be quite removed from the violence. Still, after dropping her off at her house we scooted home quickly and huddled behind our screen of dense shrubbery, shutters shut, curtains drawn, and watched the television screen.

As before, a phone call pulled our father out of the room. Again, he returned, beckoning Alex into the hall. But this time when I moved to join them, he made a face and told me to stay put. "Why?" I asked. "Just do as I say," he replied, his skin flushed dark.

Sensing a scene with potential, I stood my ground.

Mom came to see what the fuss was about. Dad pulled himself together. "I'm going down to see a friend about a gun for tonight," he said.

"A gun?" cried my mother.

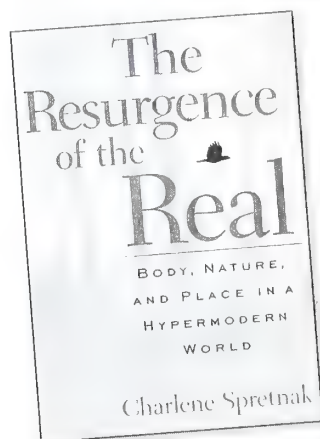
Her dislike of firearms was pronounced but forgivable; my father's was to my mind perverse.

Now here he was going for a gun without me. Standing in the tiled hallway under the curving wrought-iron banister, I placed myself be-

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tween my father and the front door, angry beyond words. I'd never understood how hypocritical, how cruelly manipulative my father could be: if ever a situation called for a responsible, informed arming of the general populace, this was it. And he was telling me that I couldn't be trusted to join him and Alex at the front lines of our home defense. Obviously, if this were Concord on that fateful April morning in 1775, my father would have left me home with the women. To churn butter or something.

"It's not fair," I said.

He hesitated to lay hands on me, I could see. But still I feared his anger.

"I don't see what you need a gun for," said Mom.

That did it. Any further delay would have meant weakening his course of action. "Okay," he said, lunging for the doorknob. I barely got out of the way in time.

**W**e only needed to drive four blocks. To my surprise, we pulled up before a house I knew, a modern split-level with a shingle roof, picture windows, a thick green lawn. Why, I'd trick-or-treated here! It seemed astonishing that such a bland facade could harbor a secret armory. But then, ever since World War II, Long Beach had prided itself on being "The Arsenal of Democracy."

The street was full of cars. Bixby Knolls was the sort of place where you did not wash your car in the driveway but took it to the car wash. Yet here we were on this secluded, shady street, where picture windows looked out at mature elm and locust trees, and cars were double- and triple-parked everywhere. Men were everywhere. Many were dressed for the suburban weekend, others were in yard clothes or coveralls, some in white T-shirts and jeans. Besides the professional class that belonged to Bixby Knolls, there were oil workers, dockworkers, and aerospace engineers, men with meat on their bones, men with bristling crew cuts. Men who washed their own cars in their own driveways.

The scene on the lawn was busy but calm. The living room, on the

other hand, pulsed with the noise and energy of a stag night or a prizefight. The television was on full blast. There was a large, gleaming steel coffee urn. No women were present. Men milled around, peering into one another's faces, clapping one another on the back, braying loudly. Cans of beer and pint bottles of whiskey were passed from hand to hand. The point of our being here seemed lost in the bath of enforced camaraderie, the release of tension.

In the midst of all this a man came out of a back room and wove through the crowd holding a shotgun in each fist, barrel-up. He looked grim until someone in the crowd said something that made everybody laugh, and his stern features dissolved into a pleasure so unmistakable I felt it with him. I felt a part of something.

Being young and crew-cut, I was coming in for some attention now. Men smiled or, even better, nodded judiciously as if sizing me up for active duty. Out of the blue, someone slapped my back; another gave my head a fast knuckle-rub.

But soon I realized that our father was distinctly unhappy with the scene, or rather with our witnessing it. Dad was no snob. He had a healthy appetite for the group experience, whether it was taking us out on charter fishing boats for the bonita run, attending our semipro football team's games, or taking the entire sign-toting family along to a Goldwater for President rally. It could even be said that, in his civic life, he was democracy itself in action, devoting himself to the Scouts, to local government, to the Rotarians, the Elks, the Kiwanis Club.

Yet this democratic nature often alienated others. Quite without intending it, he was "too clean" for many people's comfort. Pure Protestant uplift came naturally to him. He was a product of Long Beach's pre-war heritage as a seaside Chautauqua town, a regular stop on the summer "tent circuit" of the 1890s, which offered the people a genteel and edifying program of music, lectures, and religious education. That is how the Wallaces came here, among the thousands of families from the Mid-

west: as summer people to a temporary town, transported by the Southern Pacific Railway, which sought to promote its large California real estate holdings. It made sense to escape the Midwest to bathe in the sea and the delightfully unhumid air, especially when you could claim it as moral improvement. A Methodist conception of Paradise, right down to the bloomer bathing dresses worn by the ladies, Long Beach then was clean and flat and empty—a blank canvas in an optimistic age. The yearly encampments constructed house-size tents along the high bluff overlooking what was proudly called the finest beach in southern California. Modesty and respectability were prized, turning what to us might seem a potentially risible situation into a festival that practically flaunted its high-mindedness.

The scene at the gun dispenser house, on the other hand, was chaotic, lacking in discipline, aswirl with giddy currents. When the television newscast switched to coverage of the section of Watts that was burning, those watching began to shout abuse. Men gestured obscenely at the screen; every other word seemed to be "nigger," the sound of which would excite other men to say it—like a spell, an enchantment—again and again. When an actual black person was shown, the men would shake their fists at the flat image on the screen and roar like apes impatiently caged at a zoo.

Although he was recognized and greeted, my father seemed stiff, and his discomfort did not go unnoticed. By now I had adjusted to the disorderliness and was watching a heavy-set man admit people to the room where the guns were. When my father's turn came, this man greeted him loudly. "How are ya? Isn't this really something?" His small talk was flushing Dad out into the open, forcing him to declare himself. The man knew each other by sight from the neighborhood, I figured, through Little League or the Scouts, but they weren't natural allies. "Well, are we finally going to show the niggers," he asked.

"We live so close to Atlantic Avenue that . . . to be on the safe side



ou know . . ." My father was trying to keep his voice down.

"I know! They're gonna come pouring in tonight! You're on the front lines!" The man looked around him triumphantly. There were locker-room cheers. "So, what can I do for you?" Bragging about his suppliers, he reeled off the names of a coalition of groups, some respectable—the NRA and the National Guard—others those my father and mother had always firmly identified as extremist, like the Minutemen and George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party. When he flatly claimed to be in touch with the police, my father nodded, as if he knew this already. The noise level in the room made eavesdropping difficult, but Dad must have questioned the affiliation with those other, more extremist groups then, because our neighborhood Paul Revere raised his voice in righteous indignation:

"You think the niggers aren't organized? You think this wasn't all planned?"

Dad said something that could have meant yes, could have meant no.

"Well, they have another thing coming. Right? We're all in this together. Right?" he demanded, leaving no doubt that Dad had to reply, one way or another.

"Right," my father said, briskly.

It seemed as if he would say more, but he didn't. Our neighbor shrugged. "Okay, what can I get you? How about a pump 12-gauge?"

"That'll do some damage," said one of the living-room rowdies, half of whom had turned from the television to watch our exchange. I enjoyed their attention. For me, this was a rich and associative moment, a ceremony in which my father's elusive military ardor would show itself in full gleaming array, like Achilles emerging from behind the glittering women. Of course, I also foresaw being initiated into the suburban militia.

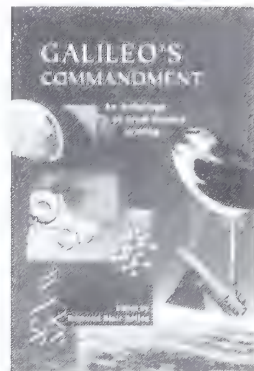
Dad nodded, but his expression was pained. I had seen this face before, when someone unexpectedly cursed or told an off-color joke. Despite his size—six-foot-three, two-hundred-lb—pounds—and his hearty manner,

Dad was usually unconvincing when playing the role of a man's man. Raised to exacting standards by his parents, he had escaped being infected with cynicism through some back path in the culture that I sensed was already closed to me, even at the age of thirteen. In a way, his innocence would always be greater than mine.

By this time, I was actually feeling sorry for him. I wanted to tell him to relax, to not be afraid of this dangerous moment. At least it was real, a far cry from the ersatz ceremonials of Scouting and the cashmere-cardigan rigors of the golf course. But Dad's sincerity was not simpleminded. It was of a piece with his belief in the righteousness of Long Beach, of California, of America. His own life was proof that the system worked to the advantage of "the good guys," as he called them. A good student and a good athlete, he went to Stanford—a jump in class over the state universities—at age sixteen; then the war offered him an immediate promotion, a spot at the Naval Academy that in peacetime could never have been his. From there he went back to Stanford Law School, worked hard, married his high school sweetheart, and came home to raise his family.

The system worked for my father, just as it had for at least four generations of our family, ever since the destitute Wallace clan had come over from Scotland, via Venezuela. Five sons had ended up as bank tellers. It had worked for my father's father, Don Sr., who built a radio in a barn at age six and by nineteen was running President Woodrow Wilson's communications at the Paris Peace Conference. Selling his own radio sets, Don Sr. took the Depression in stride, becoming ever more successful and recognized internationally as an inventor and amateur radio ambassador. He spent hour upon hour chatting with fellow hams around the world, enthusiasts whose names had been replaced by call signs like his own, W6AM, and whose language was always Morse code, so that nationality and race and drama were always secondary. To W6AM there was no color, only the strength and clarity of your signal.

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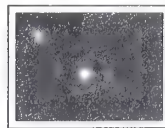


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All this made Donny a sterling example but a hard act to follow. Yet, in his own way, my father was trying—and this singular afternoon in August would be, as it turned out, a crossroads.

A knowing smile on his face, our neighborhood arms supplier stepped back into a plainly decorated bedroom. Tilting my head, I could just see a double bed with a green bedspread that matched the dark green wallpaper. Laid out on it were ranks of long-barreled guns, dully glinting in the half-light; cardboard boxes at the base of the bed were filled with packages of cartridges.

The man came back and handed Dad a shotgun and a box of cartridges. "Ever use one?" he asked.

"Dove hunting."

"Then I don't have to tell you what to do. Right, boys?" The boys responded with suggestions of their own. "Now, how about this one?" he asked, squinting at my brother. "I think a 20-gauge. Less of a kick. Double-barreled. Easier to operate."

Dad raised a dismissive hand. "I don't really—"

The man looked him in the eye. "You think you can handle a whole tribe of Zulus yourself, huh? You think they're carrying spears out there?"

Those watching gave vent to some Tarzan yells. But my father didn't smile. Then the man asked, "You willing to bet your wife and children on that?" And he pressed the 20-gauge into Alex's outstretched hands.

When Dad didn't tell Alex to give it back, I edged forward, so anxious not to lose this opportunity that I actually started to tremble.

Staring up at the man, who resembled ever so slightly my favorite comic-book hero, Sergeant Rock, I was rewarded when one of his large hands landed on my shoulder, where it began kneading the muscle against the bone, slowly, a little painfully but with affection.

He peered into my face. "So, little man, you want to protect your Mama from the niggers, too?"

Dad said, "We've got enough, we're fine. Thanks."

My hopes now rested with the man, with Sarge.

"Nah, don't let the boy down. I've got a nice .410 shotgun, real light, practically no recoil to speak of. Over and under. Perfect for when they come swarming over the back fence."

Dad shook his head. Sarge's finger and thumb pressed deep into my shoulder until it burned, a hot spot the size of a half-dollar.

"No."

Despairing, at last I spoke. "Dad!"

"No." He shifted his gun to the other hand and shook with Sarge, who gave me a pitying, sympathetic look and ruffled my hair one more time. We passed through the cacophonous living room and into the bright sunlight, I near tears, my brother tactfully silent.

At home, outside the house, after we'd parked the Buick in the garage, my father paused to examine our property. Built by a corrupt former harbor commissioner, it was an authentic Spanish Mission hacienda, which meant that life was directed inward, to the patio and garden. The smooth exterior walls and slanting tile roofs, designed for a defensive purpose in a world long gone, seemed newly comforting.

We started inside, locking doors and gates as we went. Mom greeted us in the kitchen, nervous, unable to take her eyes off the guns. Now, however, Dad seemed preternaturally calm, as if the experience had put him through such a gauntlet of emotions that he'd recovered a less apocalyptic perspective.

The guns were laid down on the carpet. Placing the living-room sofa across the bottom of the picture window, then stacking all available pillows and cushions upon it, Dad explained that we would show no lights tonight, that no one would walk directly in front of any windows or peer out into the street. "I'll be sitting right here," he said, pointing to an overstuffed chair he'd dragged over to the wall between the front door and the picture window. "With both guns—unloaded."

And that was all the discussion he allowed. Henceforth, we understood, any chatter about the riots, hysterical or otherwise, was out of bounds. When darkness finally fell, even the

television was turned off, and a velvety August dusk filled the chambers and hallways. As Dad took up his position, I had the eerie realization that he was settling into the same chair, in the same resigned manner, that he adopted on Christmas Eve, when there were many unwrapped presents and empty stockings to fill before he could sleep.

Now came the last pang: saying good night and going upstairs with my sisters and our mother, upstairs with the women, while downstairs Dad and Alex sat down to share the graveyard watch. Dad's last words: "Nobody comes downstairs until I say so. There are not going to be any accidental shootings tonight. You hear me, Donny?"

Singled out, I gave the answer that he demanded and went to my room. It was lighter upstairs. Again and again as I sat cross-legged on my bedspread I heard the sirens rising, warbling in strange, electronic harmony and shifting tone as they went away. Usually a faint mill white, the night sky had a reddish hue toward Los Angeles—or was only imagining it, tinting with a heart what deserved to be visible. I looked at my walls—hung with weapons, including a Tunisia scimitar, a cutlass, a Japanese officer's sword, a boomerang, and a ironwood spear from New Guinea tipped with a nasty barbed point—and saw that my dream life of war-ennobling deeds had come crushingly, humiliatingly, down to this. Pressing my hands to my eyes, rocking on my bed, I let go and sobbed my heart out, so that when morning came I awoke without a sense of time's passage.

But as the night had passed, so had the danger. Roaring like angry wraiths through the streets, cars with heavy-throated mufflers had surged back and forth, again and again crisscrossing the neighborhood with sirens wailing in their wake. At one point, a great glow had gone up in the sky. Dad and Alex had loaded their weapons. Now, tired and spent, they sat at the dining-room table sipping coffee together and reading the newspapers that had somehow managed to get delivered.





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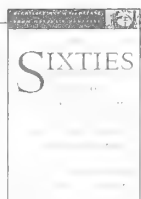
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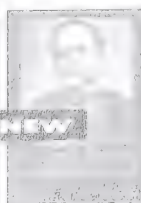
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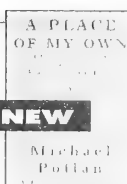
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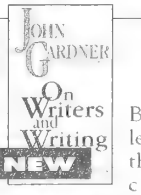
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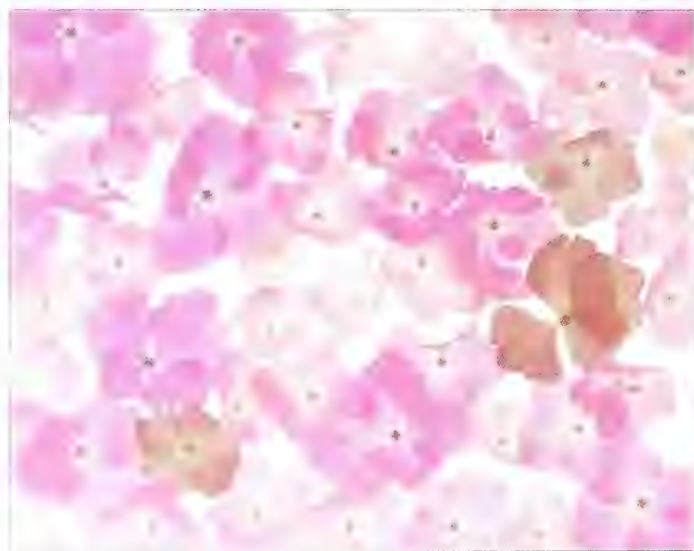
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By Spencer Nadler

As an interpreter of human-tissue biopsies, my work is largely an art. I carefully observe changes of color, delicately feel for variations in texture, and, with my microscope, peer in on the cells to study their form and tableau. The impact of disease can be very subtle.

The need for my diagnoses to be free of error can provoke unwanted stress. Often the image of a challenging biopsy stays with me for hours, even days. These cells, floating freely in my mind like anxiety, play their tricks, show me their elusive faces, their phantom patterns. They seem to conspire to confuse me. Through the years I've developed tricks of my own—serial sections, step cuts, a host of special tissue stains—designed to counter their deception. When nuclei are marred by craggy clumps of chromatin, and cell patterns appear baroque or abstract, I cull from memory similar compositions and their interpretations.

After many years at my microscope, the number of different cells and patterns that I recognize, the blueprints of



disease, seems infinite. I rely on this experience. And although the majority of biopsies are no longer diagnostic challenges for me, interpretation can, on occasion, be tortuous.

My surgical pathology office is within the hospital histology lab, appended to the surgery suites. A sliding glass window separates us from ten operating rooms. It is twenty-five steps from my desk to that window. My biopsy, if

it is to be interpreted during surgery, begins within minutes of the tissue's arrival. I am mindful that the patient

under anesthetic and the time is of the essence.

When I arrive each morning, I scan the operating-room schedule for surgeries that will require rapid biopsy interpretation—resections, wedge or core biopsies of breast masses. Then I have my coffee in the surgeon's lounge and listen to the surgeons' stories. A surgeon's demeanor—anxious, diffident, vague—stirs me to anticipate problems, to consult the patient's X rays and charts prior to receiving the biopsy. I am most comfortable with surgeons whose judgment I feel

beyond reproach; they tend to be meticulous, obsessive.

An accomplished surgeon I have practiced with for years tells me about a thirty-five-year-old patient I'll call Hanna Baylan. She has a palpable mass in her left breast; on mammogram it looked suspicious for malignancy, and the core needle biopsies I interpreted a week ago showed infiltrating carcinoma. The

Spencer Nadler is a medical pathologist in a hospital in southern California.



orning she is having a lumpectomy to remove the cancer-containing portion of her left breast as well as a lymph-node resection in her left axilla. These nodes are markers for tumor spread beyond the breast. She is worried, the surgeon tells me, that she will not live to see her three small boys grow up.

**P**reoccupied with cancer cells, I have no social or psychological use of a cancer patient. I retrieve this woman's core biopsy slides from the file and review them in my office. I fix on elements of function, not form: milk-producing lobules, milk-transporting ducts, nipples, fat, connective tissue. I fix on cancer. After her surgery, my responsibility will be to classify the cancer, grade its aggressiveness, and determine the extent of its local spread. I will cull the facts that are pertinent to any use of radiation or chemotherapy, will help the physicians mount their therapeutic blows.

"Biopsy, room two," shouts the operating-room nurse.

I walk the twenty-five steps through the cramped histology lab, which smells of formaldehyde. The counters are crowded with vats of tissue-processing chemicals—alcohol, formalin, xylene, paraffin—and glass vessels of vivid red and blue tissue stains. A cryostat—the frozen-section machine standing in the corner—hums like a fluorescent lamp.

Hanna Baylan's lumpectomy tissue, swathed in gauze and labeled, sits on a counter beneath the sliding glass window. With gloved hands I unveil a round, fatty mass, its yellow surface smeared with fresh blood. It has the look and consistency of a ripe nectarine. I bisect it with a knife and see a mass the size of a pit at the center, as white and gritty as sandstone. Its retracted, deep-rooted look and rock-hard feel imply carcinoma. The axillary lymph nodes arrive buried in fat. There are twenty-two in all—soft, oval, encapsulated like beans. Two of the beans are hard and white, gritty when cut. The cancer has exceeded its breast of origin. I pass this information on to the surgeon.

At 6:30 the following morning I

remove the plastic wrap from my microscope and continue my examination. I stare at the sprawl of Hanna Baylan's tumor. The foreboding bulkiness of the cancer cells, the scowl of their thickset nuclear faces, looms through the lenses. They are gathered into inane configurations that crudely mimic breast ducts.

Although this cancer splays out garishly into adjacent breast tissue, the resection margins are free of malignant cells: the local cancer has likely been entirely removed. Eleven of the twenty-two axillary lymph nodes bear cancer cells, however, and the probability of spread to other organs is high. I classify this tumor as an infiltrating, moderately differentiated carcinoma arising from breast ducts.

I have completed my evaluation of Hanna Baylan. I await two more breast biopsies, a lung biopsy, and three skin biopsies. All are suspected of being malignant. Hanna Baylan will fast become a memory, a name on yesterday's surgery schedule with a tumor attached.

By confining myself to cells, I stay clear of the fiery trials of illness. I remain detached; I render my diagnoses with a cool eye. My fascination with the microscopic form, color, and disposition of cells drives me like a critic to interpret, to applaud or decry for the rest of us. Paradoxically, observing so much of life through a microscope has left me feeling that I've sampled too little, that I've missed the very warp and woof of it.

**"D**r. Nadler?"

A young woman is standing at my office door.

"Sorry if I'm disturbing you, but no one was at the reception desk, so I walked right in," she says. "I wonder if I can see the slides from my breast tumor?"

"Now?" It's six o'clock, the end of a long day.

She enters and sits in the chair by my desk. "You don't remember me, do you, Doctor?" she says. "I was at the lecture you gave at the Wellness Community last month."

Her cropped, blonde hair has a uniform thinness that suggests

chemotherapy; her face is gaunt and pale. Still, she seems undaunted, her self-esteem intact. During the lecture I had used a projecting microscope to show on-screen what the cells and patterns of different tumors look like.

"I'm Hanna Baylan. You diagnosed my cancer forty-three days ago."

I don't recall seeing her at the lecture, but I do remember, in vivid detail, the nectarine lineaments of her lumpectomy tissue. I'm like the surgeon who selectively focuses on the organs he's rectified or removed. My work lies apart from Hanna's face, among the tiniest kernels of bodily things.

"It's pretty late," I tell her.

"Yes, it is," she says. "Maybe it's already spread to my bones."

This is not what I meant. "Why don't I see what I can do." I wish she had called ahead, given me a chance to review her slides.

I retrieve all her breast and lymph-node slides from the file and move her chair opposite mine. With effort, pain maybe, she leans across the desk to peer through the alternate set of eyepieces on my two-headed microscope. Resting her elbows on the desktop, she looks in on the events of her body—cells long dead, now fixed and colored—that have given rise to her affliction.

She listens quietly as I move the pointer across the microscopic landscape. "These clustered islands of glands are the lobules," I tell her. "Milk is produced here in the lactating breast."

"They look like pink hydrangeas to me," she says, "a sprawling garden of them." She talks excitedly, asserting interpretive authority over her own cells. I can only imagine the variety of forms a cellular array such as this might suggest to the uninitiated eye.

"And these?" she asks. "What are they?"

"Ducts," I say. "They transport lobular milk outward to the nipple."

"My God. Look at them," she says. "Ponds, lakes, rivers, estuaries that carry milk. It all looks so peaceful." With her legs braced against the chair, she hoists her tiny body onto



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my desk and hunches over the microscope as if to enhance her view.

There is little need for pedagogy; she is finding her own truths with metaphor. I switch from the four-power objective, the scanner—a magnification of forty—to the forty-power objective—a magnification of four hundred—and individual cells take prominence over cell patterns.

She clasps her hands together. "It's as if all the planets in the universe have come together here."

"See the uniform cells lining the lobules and ducts?" I point out the blue nuclei, the pink cytoplasm, the discrete nuclear membranes.

I switch back to the scanner and we pass over fields of ducts and lobules. Then I wait a few minutes, allowing her to absorb her own cellular beauty. She sits still, inspecting her departed flesh.

Reluctantly, I replace the slide of her normal breast tissue with one of the cancer.

"Whoa," she says.

She stares into the microscope, transfixed by the disarray of her own malignant growth, a raw view of her life spread out before her. "It looks like distorted Hula Hoops twirling frantically," she says. "It's all damaged, isn't it? Just like my real world."

"This is your real world, too," I say.

She looks at me over the top of the microscope. "People don't shun me because my tumor ducts look like reckless Hula Hoops."

Like Charon ferrying between the living and the dead, she glides back and forth between her threatened life and her dead, stained biopsy cells. She quickly grasps the cause and effect—critical cell changes have twisted her life. For years I have processed thousands of such cases, determined the manifold forms of disease. But I've never been an intimate part of anyone's illness, never felt the connection between cells and a larger self.

"Losing my hair terrifies me," she says. She fingers it, pulls at it gently with her hands. Not a single strand comes loose, and she is reassured. "I've got a wig but I hate it. So I

wear baseball caps and tie scarves through my hair. I'm lucky. I look good in scarves. Still, I feel hideous. People think it's just vanity. It's much more than that," she says. "Every time I see my scalp poking through, I'm reminded. I feel how different I am, how lonely."

"You'll have your hair back in a few months."

Tears well up in her eyes. "It helps a whole hell of a lot."

In *The Notebooks of Malte Laurin Brigge*, Rilke writes, "If I am changing, then surely I am no longer the person I was, and if I am something else than heretofore, then it is clear that I have no acquaintances." I believe that Hanna's perception of her disease-tainted self is a source of her loneliness, and it pains me that all I have to offer her is my familiarity with her cancer cells.

"What chemotherapy does to me is unbelievable," she continues. "After a treatment I wake up around midnight with a funny taste in my mouth and then boom, an incredible indigestion—like a volcano—with nausea and vomiting that rips my insides out. It's excruciating. Every bone in my body aches. Things stop for a while, then it starts all over again. Off and on for the rest of the night."

She is on Cytoxan and Adriamycin, she tells me. These drugs are used during mitosis to prevent cell reproduction, destroying the rapidly growing cancer cells, hair cells, bone marrow cells, and cells lining the gastrointestinal tract. Hence the tumor destruction, hair loss, reduction of blood cells, nausea, and vomiting. It's a savage exposure, a supervised chemical warfare.

"I was alone in bed one night last week," she says, looking up from the microscope. "My husband was out of town, my kids were asleep, it was after midnight. I lay there staring at the ceiling, scared out of my mind, shaking uncontrollably. Suddenly, warm, white light beamed through the window and rested on my chest. It was a miracle the way it soothed me to sleep." She slides back into her seat. "I realized when I woke up that God was looking out for me," she says.



I am moved by the way Hanna aligns herself with all her positive expectations.

Six years go by before Hanna again reenters my life. I have not heard of her struggle. I have retained the professional cool, the isolation that is so much a part of my life.

Once again she appears at the end of my day. She walks slowly and sits with some difficulty in the chair by my desk. She's frailer now, and pallor makes her eyes seem dark and watchful. Her cancer, she tells me, recurred the year before. Three spots on her ribs, one in a lung. She submitted to high doses of chemotherapy, more toxic than before, then underwent a bone-marrow transplant.

"The cancer in my bones was like little old lady," she says. "It puttered around, came and went. But I could deal with it." Her jaws tighten. It's the drugs, not the cancer, that are so hard to take. People who haven't had chemo never really understand that. And it's the fear that you may die. It's been hard to come to terms with that."

She outlasted the poisons, metabolized them. The cancer in her bones and lungs disappeared from view. Cells harvested from her marrow before this chemotherapy were then returned to replace what the drugs had destroyed, hopefully to spawn a new remission.

If she is to succumb to her illness, her bearing shows no hint of defeat.

"I'm here to see my cancer cells gain," she says. "I'd like to see them rejected on the big screen, like you did at your lecture." Her arched brows reflect her resolve. "I need to confront them one at a time, get a handle on their persistence."

I set up the xenon projector in the hospital auditorium. Before long we were alone in a large, quiet space.

I project one of her biopsy slides onto the screen, magnifying her cancer cells to the size of golf balls. They glare at us like cyclopean monsters—granular, pink bodies clinging to one another, each nuclear blue eye reflecting its own confusion.

She walks slowly down the center

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### SOLUTION TO THE MAY PUZZLE

NOTES FOR "FOLLOW THE DOTS"  
Note: Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (\*).

CLUES: 1. grave; two mngs.; 2. (s)tick-le(r); 4. magnets\*; 6. meti\*-er; 7. Ee-yore; 10. r(enam)ing; 12. st(o)re\*; 13. dun-e; 14. framed, two mngs.; 17. on(lin)e; 18. color(ado); 19. kr(a)uT (rev.); 20. (Depar)dieu; 21. ka(yak); 22. yawl (pun); 25. brand-Y; 29. roller, two mngs.; 30. heel, two mngs.; 31. liar, rev.; 32. gu(n)-i.(l)e.; 34. rot-ten, rev.; 39. (g)lazier; 39b. l(inn)et; 42. cut-e(gg)head; 44. arguing\*; 48. gel-D; 50. monte\*; 51. taut, homophone; 53. sensors, homophone; 55. nature\*; 56. dic(i)er; 57. llsa\*; 59. garb(age); 62. L.(ape)L.; 63. lass-oers\*; 65. qu(art)et; 66. chariness\*; 70. wrist\*(e); 71. di(A.M.-on)d.

M	A	G	R	I	T	T	E	M	A	N	E	T
V	E	R	M	E	E	R	I	N	G	R	E	S
D	U	F	Y	G	O	Y	A	C	O	R	O	T
K	A	N	D	I	N	S	K	Y	K	L	E	E
B	R	E	U	G	E	L	W	A	R	H	O	L
G	A	U	G	U	I	N	R	E	N	O	I	R
U	T	R	I	L	L	O	S	T	E	L	L	A
C	E	Z	A	N	N	E	T	U	R	N	E	R
G	I	O	T	T	O	M	A	T	I	S	S	E
L	E	G	E	R	M	O	N	D	R	I	A	N
D	E	G	A	S	D	A	L	I	H	A	L	S
B	R	A	Q	U	E	P	I	C	A	S	S	O
W	H	I	S	T	L	E	R	D	U	R	E	R

G E O R G E S S E U R A T

SOLUTION TO MAY DOUBLE ACROSTIC (NO. 173). (RING) LARDNER: WHAT I (OUGHT TO OF) LEARN'T IN SCHOOL. They was hardly a evening passed when some gal's father did not feel him self call. I on to pole his head out his fourth Street window and tell these same boys to shut up and go home for the sake of a leading character in the bible.

CONTEST RULES: Send the quotation, the name of the author, and the title of the work, together with your name and address, to Double Acrostic No. 174, Harper's Magazine, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to Harper's, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by June 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to Harper's Magazine. The solution will be printed in the July issue. Winners of the April Double Acrostic (No. 172) are Polly M. Foard, Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Mark E. Smith, San Diego, California; and Barbara Wolf, Portland, Maine.



aisle. The large screen hangs on the front wall between a varnished wood lectern and a row of X-ray view boxes. "That's perfect," she says. "I want to see these guys up close and personal." She touches the screen, runs her fingers over her cancer cells as though she were gathering their random spread into some kind of order. The loveliness of cells on slides, all the different shapes and colors, allows Hanna to give her breast cancer its own identity.

"They're like moons," she says, "each with a different face, a different complement of light and dark."

I turn off the auditorium lights. Her hands spread a silhouette that shadows her moons like eclipses.

"I'd like to spend time here," she says. "Touch them, get to know them."

"No rush."

I stand at the projector in darkness. She is forty-three, as I recall. Her mother died in the 1950s, when breast cancer was considered a local disease. The ideal treatment back then was to resect as much local tissue—the entire breast, underlying pectoral muscle, lymph nodes—as possible before the cancer could spread. I recall receiving so many of these horrific specimens in the 1960s that I felt like Artemis of Ephesus, the Great Mother of Life, whose torso teemed with breasts. It was disquieting to conjure up an image of the maimed women attached, only moments earlier, to the specimens they had relinquished. We now know that breast cancer is not necessarily a local disease, that it can be a covert presence in the breast for years, shedding cells that rain through blood and lymph vessels and sprawl to other body parts long before the primary mass is discovered. Hanna's cancer cells had obviously left home by the time she felt her mass, finding sanctuary in her axillary lymph nodes. She needed drug treatments then to defend her body from the spread. Although her breast surgery was far less aggressive and disfiguring than her mother's, Hanna's drug therapy has greatly exacerbated her difficulties.

"I'm returning from Lilliput," Hanna announces. She walks back

along the aisle, spotlighted by the projector beam, looking as hopeful as a bride.

When I turn on the lights, she is standing beside me. "I must confide a strange thing," she says. She slouches, her body seemingly depleted by the encounter with her cells. "When I finished my last cycle of chemo, I felt no sense of relief. The thought that a few bad cells could be hanging around and nothing more was being done chemically scared me. It still does."

I feel the uneasy edge between her confidence and her fear. Others are better suited to help. I can only listen.

**I** have never understood the purpose of a newspaper obituary. As a published notice of death, it certainly works well enough. As a biography filled with concrete facts—achievements, mostly—it gives the life in question a one-sided loftiness devoid of the flaws and failures that make it whole. And where is the mention of an individual's spirit, effectiveness as a human being, courage in adversity? What about people who successfully battle illness for many years before succumbing? What are their achievements in this regard, or do they simply "die after a long illness"?

Hanna Baylan's illness is very long. Four years go by before she comes to see me again; she has more questions about her cells.

"I must be stupid. The cancer is back, spread to my liver, but I just don't get it that I'm supposed to die," she says as she enters my office.

I notice how the ridges beneath her eyes have darkened, discolored by years of anguish and fear. She grimaces as she moves, pain loose inside her, and settles cautiously into the leather chair in the corner beneath my bookshelves. A CADD pump is fastened to her waist. This beeper-size gadget pumps chemo into her subclavian central line.

"I want to know more about these little buggers inside me, what really makes them tick," she says.

I assume it is the internals of cancer cells, the organelles, that she refers to. They are too small to be

seen effectively with my microscope, so I show her some black-and-white electron micrographs of cells magnified up to 100,000 times. She starts at the oblong mitochondria, whose cristae resemble zebra stripes, at the round, secretory vacuoles, which look dark and heavy as medicinal balls. I find her a freeze-etched micrograph of a nucleus that truly resembles the desolate, pocked surface of the moon.

She studies the micrograph keeps an inquisitive silence. I await the new metaphors she'll conceive to keep her cancer at bay. Our imagination is what saves us.

"Why do cancer cells keep growing and multiplying if they're so destructive to the body?" she finally says. "Why don't they just die?"

She's tired of all the pretty pictures, the metaphors. She's ready to deal with her cancer in a more direct way. I tell her that our dysfunctional and superfluous cells normally self-destruct in a programmed cellular suicide.

"Don't cancer cells self-destruct?"

"Apparently not. Cancer somehow disables the program. The cells forget how to die."

"Well, so do I," she says. A faint smile steals across her face.

Then she suddenly starts to cry, shaking as though grief has surfaced from all the deepest places. "I've been blessed with three wonderful boys and a husband who loves me," she says. "They'll be devastated if I go. So I can't give up."

Although I've never done this before, I put my arms around her and give her a long, firm hug. Her bones seem as ungraspable as hope.

**I** begin to see that the diagnosis of a disease plays little part in the healing process; nor, for that matter, does the treatment strategy. Help attuned to individual needs is what heals. Disease seems to be more than a set of facts, and illness more than a diminished way of life. They are a strange tandem that plays out differently in every host—despair, terror, agony, a call to arms, newfound clarity, transcendence, metamorphosis. Those afflicted must have their



eds satisfied on *their* terms. They  
ust control, as much as possible,  
e progress of their own adversity. I  
n feel Hanna yearn for answers. I  
ust give them to her, show her the  
ctures that help her.

The healthy tend to separate  
om the sick in much the same way  
at whites disengage from blacks,  
ales from females, rich from poor,  
ctors from patients. We find com-  
ort in what we have in common  
d threat in the many ways we dif-  
r. I feel my separation from Han-  
a, how her cancer intervenes, and  
must be prudent to be effective  
ith her. This is heartrending for  
e, because I have come to love  
er—the way she handles all that  
he has been dealt, her style, her  
pirit, her desperate determination  
o nurture her family as long as she  
in. I can no longer think of Hanna  
terms of the dead, stained cells I  
e on her slides.

She leaves my office, and I feel the  
loose strings in my life  
tighten.

A few months pass and Hanna  
eturns with her youngest son. He  
as decided to be a doctor, and she  
ants to introduce him to me. He  
as his mother's poise, her small,  
elicate features, and he fixes me  
ith probing eyes.

"Dr. Nadler shows me his biopsy  
ictures. He lets me observe my dis-  
ase," Hanna says, "so I can see what  
m up against." She is barely able to  
ontain her pride as she sits beside  
er son.

She's fought her cancer to a stale-  
mate. It's become more like a  
hronic illness than a life threat.  
and her son has lived so long with  
is mother's cancer that it is much  
ore real to him than the likeli-  
ood of any cure.

The flesh of Hanna's successful  
fe sits beside me. I answer all his  
uestions, try to inform his career  
ecision. I think he knows how  
aliantly his mother has girded her-  
elf on his behalf.

"I feel another flare-up coming  
n," Hanna says. "I'm strangely tired,  
ot quite right. So I've decided to go  
o Maine."

"What's in Maine?" I ask.

"Leaves," she says. "I'm going to  
see the fall."

I picture metastasizing tumor cells  
pushing their way into her lungs and  
liver and bones. Can she muster her  
immune system once again? Will the  
drugs still have potency for her? Will  
there be another beginning?

When Hanna Baylan and her son  
leave my office, arm in arm, there is  
a confidence about her that seems  
complete. It's as if she knows that  
falling is followed by rising, and that  
eternal falling leads to a rising in an-  
other time and place.

I return to my microscope. In the  
spread of a squamous skin cancer, I  
strain to see the deciduous leaves of  
Maine, so fiery when first fallen,  
then turning slowly to compost, to  
nurture blanketed seeds. ■

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# TINA IN THE BACKSEAT

By Donald Rawley



**T**ina puts on her stretch-lace panty hose, but she can't get the lines running up the back of the legs right. At least even. It's cramped quarters, Tina thinks, and these panty hose aren't even mine. She runs her hand through her hair and tries to remember which house she took the panty hose from. She can't.

Across the limousine, in a comfy corner seat with an overhead reading light, the man is putting on his shoes. Tina realizes the chauffeur must have seen them. Heard them.

His pants are still at his knees.

"You should pull your pants up before you try to put your shoes on," Tina says quietly, lighting a cigarette.

The man waves his penis at her—"until we meet again"—then hikes up his trousers and begins to arrange himself, smoothing out his cuffs and hair.

"A singing penis. That's nice."

"Comb your hair, honey," he whispers.

"Oh yeah, sure."

She takes another drag on her cigarette, puts it out in the door's recessed tray, then spits into her palms and runs both hands through her coal-black hair.

"Better?" She is looking at the chauffeur, who is looking at her through mirrored frames. And he's driving at night, she realizes. That's cool. Way cool.

She does know where she is. Somewhere on Wilshire in Beverly Hills, headed for the Peninsula Hotel. With a middle-aged salesman named Herbert Halstead, Herb the Verb to his

friends. Whom she met tonight, standing in her stretch-lace panty hose and her little black silk dress. On a street somewhere near the Pacific. In the fog.

Tina likes to get out in the fog. She had just taken the black silk dress from Marcia's apartment, whom she stayed overnight with,

and also took a Chinese beaded evening bag filled with amphetamines, money, and cigarettes. She likes to get in the first car that stops for her, to be in motion for days and weeks. She knows at some point during this little adventure—her fifth in a two-year period—that she will wind up on a plane going to Central America, maybe Panama City, with a millionaire, maybe, and that she'll just keep on going. She will replace her speed and Peking evening bags and Marlboro cigarettes for more beaded things, more drugs, anything she lays her hands on that she likes. And she won't stop.

She pulls out vermilion lipstick and a small jade hand mirror, and crosses her legs.

*Tina's limousine is the subject of the back-seat poem "The Backseat," The Nightland magazine will be publishing it through its November issue.*



"I hope I didn't stain your dress..." e watches Tina methodically put her lipstick. One of the spaghetti raps on her little black dress is oken.

Outside, the Christmas lights of everly Hills are sparkling through ie tinted glass of the limousine's indows and sunroof. The man ems slightly belligerent.

Tina disregards this. Her eyes be- come wide.

"Where'd you get those shoes?"

Herb looks down at his shoes.

"Cleveland."

"Of course," Tina says acidly.

They are pulling into the Peninsu- Hotel's motor court.

"You're a beautiful, beautiful girl. I ish my wife wasn't here, or you ould stay with me."

"You mean I can't stay in your om?"

"Well, no."

Tina seems bewildered. The man oks at her, getting out his wallet as ie limo comes to a halt.

"Here's five hundred dollars, hon- /."

"I'm not a whore."

"Well, what do you—"

"I said, I'm not a whore."

"Okay. Okay." The man looks at er sadly.

"You don't have any place to stay onight, do you?"

"No."

Tina sleeps in the street, in cars, on lanes, in guest bedrooms and hotel edrooms, in shacks, and once or vice in mansions. It does not matter, ie thinks. It's the going that counts.

"Take the money and get yourself nice room, pretty girl."

Tina can see the chauffeur look- ing at her through the rearview mir- or. Is he an Indian? She decides he's n Apache.

"Tell you what, Herb, you give the river the money and let me have he limo all night."

The chauffeur seems alarmed.

"All night?" he says from the front eat. His voice is deep.

"All night," she says with resigna- tion. Herb shakes his head and gives he driver the money.

"We're going somewhere now," Tina says brightly.

Herb scowls. "I don't get it."

"I like to keep moving," she says matter-of-factly. Herb begins to open the door, and Tina prepares for the rush of cool air, the sudden obvi- ous noises of life.

"You don't care, do you?" Herb says, awestruck. "You don't care what happens to you." He eyeballs her.

"If you were a guy you'd be a bum—a drifter."

When he's out of the car, she slams the door shut behind him and rolls down the electronic window.

"Mister, I don't drift. I fly."

She rolls the window up, the chauffeur laughs, and the lim- ousine purrs into a roll.

**"W**here are we going, lady?"

"My name's Tina."

"Tina. Where are you going?"

"East. Start driving east. To the desert. The Springs. We'll see the lights of downtown on our way out. That'll be nice."

"I got some tapes here in the front. You want to listen to music?"

"Sure."

"I got the Gipsy Kings. I got Mar- vin Gaye. I got Annie Lennox."

"Marvin Gaye."

Tina listens to Marvin Gaye singing "I Want You." The limou- sine is riding smoothly on the Santa Monica Freeway due east.

"What's your name?" Tina lights another cigarette, takes an ampheta- mine, and washes it down with the remains of Herb the Verb's bourbon and ginger ale. She studies the driv- er. He must be twenty-five, tops. Lots of white teeth, deep beard.

"Running Leg."

"What?"

"My name's Running Leg."

"Me Tarzan, you Jane," says Tina, staring at the black carpet. There are semen stains that she rubs away with her left foot before looking into the driver's rearview mirror.

"What tribe?"

"Navajo. I'm from Arizona."

"I passed through Phoenix once."

"I'm sure you did."

"I like to go to different cities. For no reason at all, you know?"

Running Leg grins.

"I'm not real big on city life, Tina.

I like the mountains. The sky."

"Oh God, you're not going to give me any of that nature is God, the white man took our rivers and val- leys crap, are you?"

Tina taps her nails on the pol- ished wood sides of the cabin. She wants to go faster. She wants to go as fast as the limousine will go, faster than blood through a crippled vein, faster than a hummingbird's wings.

"No, I guess no crap." Running Leg loosens his tie and takes off his chauffeur's cap. Long, thick black hair falls out. He shakes his head and puts his foot on the gas.

"Great hair, Tarzan," Tina mum- bles.

"Here's downtown. All lit up. Then on to the desert."

Tina's blood is beginning to rush.

"Cool. How fast are we going?"

"Fifty-five."

"Make it seventy, and I'll relax."

"You got it, Tina."

Running Leg puts both hands on the steering wheel. She loves how the limousine drags its long body with no sound at all.

"How old are you, Tina?"

"Twenty. That's enough of Mar- vin Gaye. Put on the Gipsy Kings for a while," Tina orders. She be- gins to reapply her mascara, using a Kleenex to wipe away the smears.

"So how old are you, Running Leg?"

"I'm twenty-five. I own this car. I own this business."

"That's nice."

"It works."

Running Leg coughs, then looks at Tina again through the rearview mirror.

"You're very pretty, Tina."

"Thanks." She stops for a moment and looks at him.

"So, how much did you see?" she asks quietly. Running Leg laughs.

"Everything. He had a fat hairy ass and no penis, Tina. My ass is much firmer, smooth like a baby, and I have much more penis than that."

"Good for you," Tina says.

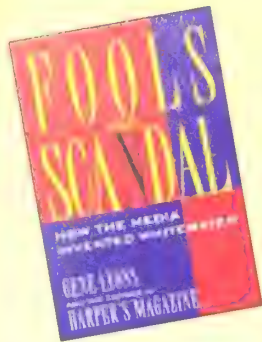
"Also, Running Leg, is there an airport in Palm Springs?"

"I think so." He frowns.

"So tell me, Tarzan, what did you



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think? Did you enjoy yourself while you watched?"

"No, I don't do that."

The Gipsy Kings begin playing. Tina loves the wailing voices, the slithering Spanish guitars. It seems to her she is in a cabin on a ship, moving swiftly and silently through a dense L.A. fog, creating its own tunnel in and out of the city. Waves lit by a hazy moon are beneath her, cut precisely by her ship's prow. She takes another amphetamine.

"You should be careful with those. Do you know what you're taking, Tina?"

"No."

A silence between chauffeur and passenger as the limousine heads toward the desert, and the fog dissipates, and Tina can see through the roof that there is a full moon.

"White grass, black shadows," she says slowly. "When the grass outside is white by the moon, you got a full moon."

"Who told you that?"

"Nobody." Tina's mother told her that.

"Where are you from, Tina?"

"No place in particular." Her mother told her about the white grass of a full moon when she was ten years old. Tina's mother left her when she was eleven, at a train station in Lincoln, Nebraska, in the snow. Her mother patted Tina's hair and spoke quite casually.

"Baby, it's time for you to travel. People will always take you wherever you want to go, remember that. All you got to do is ask. Take whatever you need, Tina. You won't see them again." Tina remembers steam from the train. Tina remembers crying. Then a man who said he had kids at home asked her if she was lost, and she looked up at the sign above him and it said, in large blue letters, MIAMI, FLORIDA, and Tina told the man she was supposed to meet her family in Miami, Florida, but she didn't have enough money. The man gave her the fare and smiled like someone impressed by his own good deeds. Tina took the train to Miami. This was easy. Her mother was doing her a favor.

Tina learned how to read and write when she was with a foster



in Boise, Idaho. She had just turned fourteen, walked out the door to the highway, past fields of ripening corn bleached a light yellow by the sun, and a car stopped at five minutes. She got in.

The driver was a fat red-haired man named Ed, who asked her if she would take her clothes off in the back seat. She thought for a moment and said "Sure," and stripped. Ed asked her to breathe heavily, and suddenly the Pontiac Grand Prix with its black stripes and a creme vinyl top pulled up and came to a stop in the middle of the empty highway. Ed had a heart attack and was dead. It seemed, so Tina rolled his car out onto the pavement and took off his big white shirt, which made him look like a dress when she used his belt to cinch it on her pair of pink tights. She took Ed's money, almost five hundred dollars, and his wedding ring and a pinkie ring, which she kept. She took the one silver chain around his neck. She got back into the car. Ed's Grand Prix, watched the cornstalks sway and shake for a few minutes, then disappeared out for a horizon, then disappeared the car and drove West un-

gas ran out. "There's no place in particular?" Running Leg's smooth voice cuts through her dreams. "I said." She can feel the heat on her face.

She wants him, wants him on top of her, inside of her. She wants to taste his sweet young man's breath, but she doesn't want the car to stop.

It's dark now in the Inland Empire and the limousine drives past the orange groves and Beaumont and blue-lit parks half-hidden by unlit sagebrush.

"Tina, look at the hills. No trees. No lights coming to the low desert. We can make the descent."

"Suddenly you're a tour guide?" Tina's eyes are glazed. She looks so beautiful in the half-light of the desert. She reaches into the back seat and pulls out a prescription bottle, small and white, extra-strength. "What are those?" asks Running

Tina looks at the pill closely. "White Cross, I think."

Running Leg grins.

"I took White Cross when I was a kid. I remember losing my virginity to Sylvia Blackfeather behind the school at the reservation. I was taking White Cross and drinking beer."

"Good for you," Tina says with a wave of her hand. She lights another cigarette and stares out the window. She likes the way whole valleys and mesas and mountains, lit with the occasional flame of some far-flung ranch house, are passing behind her. Everything is a past moment. There is only what's ahead on the road.

She catches his gaze in the mirror.

"Will you lose your virginity to me tonight, Running Leg? All over again? Like we were thirteen or fourteen and we just figured it out?"

Her voice is tired but her eyes are alert. Running Leg grins.

"Sure, I guess so."

Tina seems satisfied. As the limousine passes by the giant plaster dinosaur and Hadley's Orchard pecan and nut store, a sudden wind rattles the car.

"What the hell is that?"

"Wind. We're in the desert, Tina. Look up through the roof. You can see every star that ever was when you're in the desert."

"Make the car go faster."

"Okay."

Tina peers out through the window.

"What are those?"

Stretched out before them are thousands of small, white metal windmills, dotting the desert floor like broken shale, lit by ground lights.

"Those give Palm Springs its power. Electric lights. Air-conditioning. They never stop turning, see, because the wind never stops. Sometimes it's light, sometimes it's real heavy, but the wind never stops."

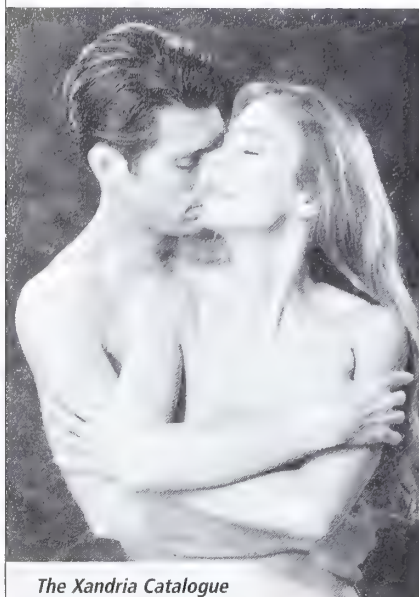
Tina can see the lights of Palm Springs glistening in the far distance.

"Let's stop here. I don't want to go to Palm Springs. Drive the car off the road and park under the windmills. Then you come in the back, with me."

Running Leg nods his head.

"And by the way, don't think I'll

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### What are the facts?

**Israel's Commitment to Peace.** Israel committed to grant wide-ranging independence to the Palestinians. Israel has meticulously adhered to its commitments under the Agreement. It has, unfortunately, opened vistas and expectations among the Palestinians that will never be fulfilled. Those are primarily that an independent Palestinian state would be allowed to come into existence, that Jerusalem would be divided, that the eastern part of the city would become the capital of such a state, and that the "refugees" — people who left Israel almost fifty years ago — should be allowed to return.

Thus, while Israel has meticulously kept its commitments under the Agreement, the Palestinians have lost no opportunity to foment unrest and bloody demonstrations in response to imaginary "violations" on the part of Israel. The first and most notorious was the rioting in response to Israel's opening an entrance to an archaeological tunnel in Jerusalem. Another pretext for violence was the construction of housing within the city limits of Jerusalem.

**Total Disregard by the Palestinians.** How have the Palestinians performed under the Agreement? The answer is: very poorly. Their disregard for virtually all of its provisions has been so egregious that it amounts to a mockery. Despite repeated assurances that they would amend their infamous Charter, which unequivocally calls for the destruction of Israel, this has still not been done. They have taken insufficient measures to combat terrorist activity — in fact the Palestinian Authority

(P.A.) continues to release well known members of terrorist groups. Even though the Agreement demands an end of incitement to violence, Yasser Arafat and his lieutenants consistently whip up their followers to "jihad" (holy war). As the bloody riots in connection with the tunnel opening and with the construction of housing units have shown, such incitements always fall on receptive ears. It was also agreed that the P.A. should have no authority in Jerusalem. Even so, the Palestinians maintain (and the

No peace can possibly come about until . . . the Palestinians . . . comply fully with the Agreement and . . . realize that violence cannot take the place of negotiation.

Israelis have so far suffered them to maintain) official presence in Jerusalem, especially the notorious Orient House, to which foreign visitors and diplomats like to make pilgrimages. One of the most egregious violations of the Agreement is the size of the Palestinian "police" force, which is now estimated at over 50,000 (virtually all of them former PLO terrorists). Incomprehensibly, Israel (always accommodating) has provided this "police" with an arsenal of attack weapons, which at the first trumped-up occasion (the opening of that tunnel entrance) were turned and used with deadly effect against Israeli civilians and military.

The list of violations of the Agreement goes on and on. There is the failure to confiscate illegal arms; the arrest and interrogation of Israelis by the Palestinian police; the abuse of VIP privileges; the movements of Palestinian "police" outside the so-called "Area A" without prior permission; the unauthorized construction of Dahaniye Airport; the unauthorized construction of Gaza Port; the failure to enforce visitors' permit requirements; and much more.

The Palestinians and the rest of the Arabs threaten at every hitch in the "peace process" to break it off or to resort to bloody violence. Regrettably, the United Nations, which takes scant interest in the mayhem, mass murder, and genocide that goes on all over the world, takes a totally disproportionate and one-sided (consistently pro-Arab) interest in this "peace process" and in the alleged "violations" of it by Israel, without considering the almost total disregard of virtually all of its provisions by the Palestinians. No peace can possibly come about until the world forces the Palestinians to comply fully with the Agreement and until they realize that violence cannot take the place of negotiation.

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#57

remember you. You're just part of the road," Tina says quietly.

"Just part of the road," Running Leg repeats in a whisper, then slows the car down as it veers off the highway and into the desert.

"I bet you remember everyone you meet, don't you, Tina? Like someday you'll write a book."

Tina stares at him with a startled, almost innocent expression.

"Why?" she says. "What for? No, Tarzan, I don't remember anything.

And I won't remember you."

The windmills wake Running Leg up. It is a windy desert morning, just a little after dawn, and he listens to their whoosh and clatter. Sand is piling up in the window grooves of his limousine. Tina is gone. He gets up, naked, and opens the cabin door, wiping the sand off with one of the paper cocktail napkins from the bar. He stands outside and takes a long pee, then rubs his nude body to get the blood going, looks up toward the sun, and yawns.

All around him, crisp white windmills are furiously spinning, thousands of them. Down the road he can see Tina quite clearly. Her spaghetti strap is still broken and her hair is tossed into a thick black web by the breeze. She is wearing sunglasses and holding her little Chinese evening bag. She is drinking one of the airline bottles of Scotch from the limo's bar. In her four-inch black patent-leather heels, she is pacing the side of the road, her dress clinging and rippling on her body.

From the opposite direction, Running Leg sees an old burgundy Mercedes slow down as it nears Tina. She walks over to the driver's-side window. A few words are spoken, and she gets in. Still naked, Running Leg hops back into his car as the Mercedes speeds by. Peering through the tinted glass, he sees a heavyset woman with stiff, white-blonde hair driving, chatting, and smiling. The last thing he sees is Tina, sunglasses on, sitting in the backseat, smoking a cigarette, a dark head, finally, in a cloudy slot of diminishing window above a license plate already too far away to read.



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## ADS FROM MEN

**AUTHOR, 44**, seeks imperious and imaginative woman for friendship/collaboration. #1238

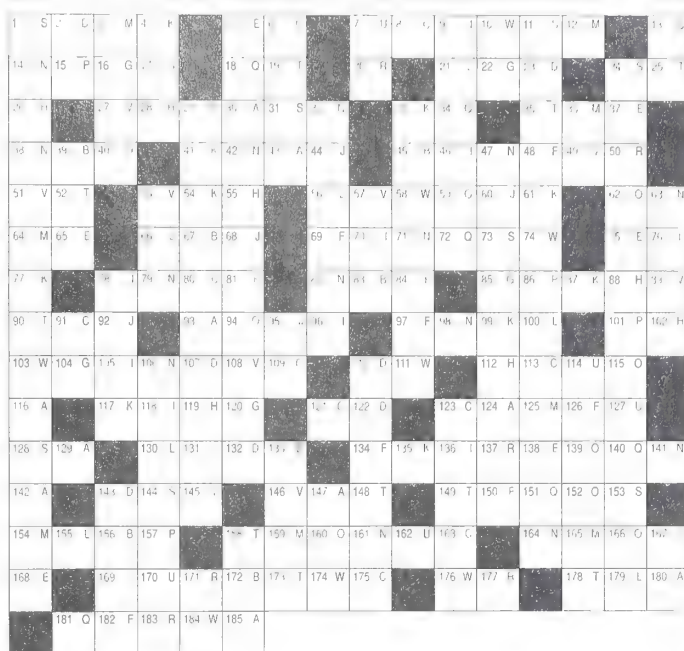
**OUTDOORSMAN, 40**, Denver, seeks like-minded woman for hiking, skiing, biking, and Scrabble. #1240

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## 50

By Thomas H. Middleton



## WORKS

- |    |  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|----|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| L. | Schlemmels' cousins  | 167 | 100 | 56  | 21  | 155 | 130 | 76  | 179 |
|    |  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 66  |
| M. | Felt contrite  | 12  | 159 | 165 | 3   | 36  | 154 | 64  | 125 |
| N. | This is said to be sufficient (5 wds.)   | 98  | 82  | 71  | 106 | 32  | 161 | 79  | 14  |
|    |  |     |     | 63  | 141 | 38  | 47  | 164 | 42  |
| O. | "No place can compare, / With my little grey home _____" (3 wds., D. Eardley Wilmot) | 59  | 29  | 160 | 94  | 166 | 62  | 115 | 139 |
|    |  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 152 |
| P. | Casual negative  | 86  | 15  | 101 | 157 |     |     |     |     |
| Q. | Summer resort on Lake Winnebago  | 34  | 151 | 140 | 72  | 18  | 1   | 181 |     |
| R. | Railroad porter  | 137 | 183 | 80  | 171 | 20  | 177 |     |     |
| S. | Increased the value of, added to (the good)  | 24  | 1   | 73  | 31  | 128 | 11  | 144 | 153 |
|    |  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 17  |
| T. | Accrue casually among (2 wds.)   | 178 | 35  | 90  | 19  | 52  | 158 | 149 | 173 |
|    |  |     |     |     |     |     |     | 148 | 25  |
| U. | Edouard moving   | 1   | 127 | 111 | 40  | 8   | 1   | 162 |     |
| V. | Low water, isola (2 wds.)  | 16  | 100 | 79  | 33  | 51  | 80  | 7   | 49  |
| W. | Himmler, egg of Scaphinotus  | 100 | 154 |     | 1   | 11  | 10  | 4   | 14  |



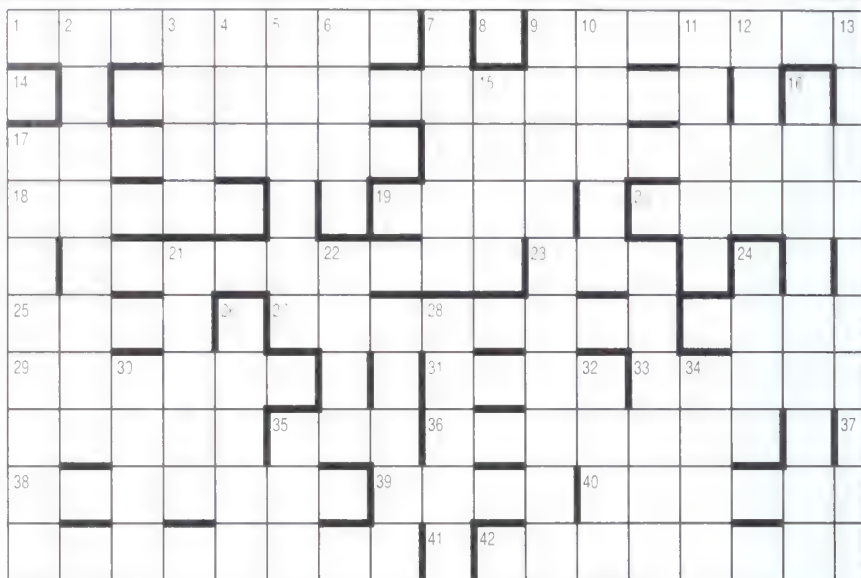
# PUZZLE

## Downers

By Richard L. Maltby Jr.

**T**en related downer clues are included. After solving the puzzle, solvers should feel they are 14-41-8-37 (reading diagonally). Clue answers include three proper names and one foreign word.

As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 73.



ACROSS

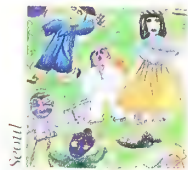
1. Judge one or three S shapes to be central (8)
9. Panski skiers losing control around start of slalom (7)
17. Sole in bean sauce stuffed with trail mix (8)
18. Is one mixed up in rackets (5)
19. Deadhead got sick from weed (4)
20. First person to have died in a callback for *Scent of a Woman* (5)
23. Belief in numismatics (3)
25. Almost tire from whoopee (4)
27. One wearing fishnet where kids rock (8)
29. Sounded catty defining the objective I was indebted to (6)
31. Old dress from time past having comeback (4)
33. Music that's desired by people in the chips? (5)
35. Excess may remove it, no end (5)
36. Divorcee document (7)
38. Editors treated with sex hormone (7)
39. Lush ring triumph takes precedence (4)
40. Makeup starts with application of rouge—make dead stop there (6)
42. Hummer were shude home piece up the phone (8)

DOWN

2. Drops from the sky hit hoes, sows (8)
3. Father raised belligerent goddess (4)
4. Place for six games (3)
5. Mark on a brown bug (6)
6. One old Hollywood studio set up greens (4)
7. Loose woman related to parent that is beheaded (5)
10. Lounges said to have fans (5)
11. Line at the bottom of a letter raises passions (9)
12. Be up for sin (4)
13. Gambling, took stock of thought (10)
15. Bank limits, really (4)
16. Squeal "I do" when dressing up nude on a couch (9)
21. More like a rookie pitcher with prominent name (5)
22. French composer brings back "oo la la," with trimmings (4)
24. Tar defile last (4)
26. Sausage with an ego—impossible (5)
28. Mug in set designs (5)
30. Candid shot: nope (4)
32. Damages—not grand sights (4)
34. Sounds like someone who's sore a lot, perhaps (4)
35. Metal part of the Dog Star? (3)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed entries with name and address to "Downers," *Harper's Magazine*, 606 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10017. If you mail all entries to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by June 8. Senders of the winning solution or a pencil solution will receive one year's subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the August issue. Winner of the April puzzle, "Theme and Variations—IV," in Elizabeth English, Mallothman, Virginia; Isabelle Williams, Saratoga Springs, New York; and Vincent Dufaux, San Antonio, Texas.





Seoul

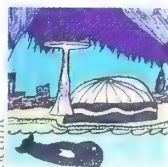


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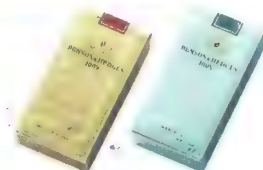


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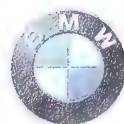




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JULY 1997

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MICHAEL D. DOLAN, J. H. HARRIS,  
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# LETTERS

## Censorship, Part I

Michael Pollan's essay on poppy cultivation and the government's blundering drug policy ["Opium, Made Easy," Folio, April] might be appreciated for its whimsy and humor were it not also a chilling reminder of the incremental totalitarianism that the war on drugs has produced. During my thirty-five-year career, I served in the New York City Police Department and as chief of police in Kansas City, Missouri, and San Jose, California. Since my retirement in 1991, I have tried to expose the hypocrisy, corruption, violence, and racism inherent in America's doomed war against drugs.

It is difficult to generate a rational debate on our national drug policy, because the issue is largely religious in nature. The groups who successfully lobbied to criminalize drugs a century ago saw drug use as sinful and succeeded in codifying their religious views in the nation's penal statutes. Thus it is that drugs and drug users have been demonized. The prohibition of alcohol resulted in violence, corruption, and widespread disrespect for the law. So has the prohibition of other drugs. In the best Orwellian tradition, drug war hawks call for ever more severe punishments while turning a blind eye to institutionalized corruption, official perjury, and the increasing erosion of civil rights in America. As a result of draconian criminal penalties, \$500 worth

of drugs in a source country brings \$100,000 on the streets of an American city. All the cops, prisons, and armies in the world cannot overcome such a profit margin.

The first casualty in war is truth. It is one thing for the DEA to lie about how opium is produced and its effects on users but quite another to put hundreds of thousands of people in jail using illegal police methods. In 1995, state and local police made roughly one million arrests for possession of drugs. Such arrests should require a search warrant, yet very few warrants were used. In hundreds of thousands of cases, otherwise honest police officers feel justified in illegally searching people and then lying about it under oath. They call it "testilying" or "white perjury." In cities all across the country, thugs with badges have planted evidence, sold drugs, and committed other drug-related crimes that are often protected by a police code of silence.

Pollan is right to fear government reprisal for his writings. Despite my years in policing, some top law-enforcement officials have wondered out loud whether I have "gone over to the other side" and started using drugs since my retirement. I have been labeled an enemy simply for criticizing antidrug paranoia. In the minds of many law-enforcement officers, the enemy is automatically guilty and must be destroyed. Some of the officials reading Pollan's article will undoubtedly believe that his future gardening should take place on a prison farm. I hope he has a good lawyer.

Joseph D. McNamara  
Stanford, Calif.

Harper's Magazine welcomes reader response. Please address correspondence to Letters Editor. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to editing. Volume precludes individual acknowledgment.



He is not a brave man who spits on the sidewalk simply because it is illegal. Michael Pollan's "Opium, Made Easy" is worse than empty and self-indulgent—it is an insult to dissent. "I had not planned to slit even one of my poppies, for fear that it was the step that would take me across the line into criminality. But now I knew I had already taken the fateful step. *In for a dime, in for a dollar.*" Please. Pollan isn't in for a nickel. It is plain to any reader of this overblown psychodrama that at no point did Pollan place at risk even the smallest portion of his comfortable station.

I, too, am a felon. I have purchased marijuana on the streets of New York and smoked it publicly. I have consumed hallucinogenic mushrooms and morning-glory seeds (which will make you violently ill before they make you trip). Admissions of this nature in national publications are both routine and safe. It is a path well charted through the pages of *High Times* and the *New York Times*. The DEA, the FBI, and the police will not care any more than I do about Pollan's sojourn "in-

to the country of criminality." They have less pretentious fish to fry.

The only story here belongs to Jim Hogshire, whom Pollan refused to invite into his home lest he further incriminate himself and whose experience Pollan mines exclusively for its apparent justification of his own paranoia. Pollan's readers are not interested in his personal cowardice; they are interested in opium, his purported subject. That we receive no indication of whether Pollan brewed his tea, drank it, and experienced a blessed cessation of idle worry sucks the promised centerpiece straight out of the piece.

In the closing paragraphs of the article, as it becomes abundantly clear that Pollan will refuse to reward his reader's patience with a description of any actual experience, he slyly attempts to shift his soft focus from himself to the capriciousness of narcotics law. He casts his own article as a demand for civil rights. But civil disobedience requires . . . disobedience. Pollan has decried what he perceives to be an abridgment of his civil liberties with

self-censorship. How bold! The law has little to fear from his pen.

Simon M. Greenwold  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

That Michael Pollan did not use his poppies to make opium tea clearly shows the chilling effect of the war on drugs—although I, for one, have set the tea kettle to boiling. In the small and isolated community where I live there is an abundance of poppies growing in people's gardens. My eighty-six-year-old neighbor tells me that in the early 1900s, after the railroad was punched through the northern continental divide, many of the workers (recent arrivals to our verdant shores) chose to settle here. They brought with them their unique pharmacopeia of home-grown remedies, and one of their curatives was opium tea. My neighbor no longer makes her own "medicine," though. She prefers instead a quick and legal fix of Jack Daniel's.

Ronald E. Krueger  
Hungry Horse, Mont.

*Continued on page 84*

From *Virgin Records*

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A black and white portrait of Maia Ettinger, a man with glasses, smiling. He is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt.

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*Maia Ettinger*

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# NOTEBOOK

Abracadabra  
By Lewis H. Lapham

Who you gonna believe—me or your  
ing eyes?

—Richard Pryor

On the final afternoon of the Masters golf tournament last April in Georgia, Fuzzy Zoeller, a prior winner of the event, attempted a joke about Tiger Woods, this year's winner, that fell, like a poorly played shot, into heavy sand. Woods at that moment was the best-known golfer in the country, famous not only for his exceptional talent but also for his young age (twenty-one) and his mixed race (part Asian, part black); on the assumption that Woods would have the honor of choosing what was to be served at the dinner preceding next year's tournament, Zoeller said he hoped the menu wouldn't consist of fried chicken and collard greens. It wasn't a good joke—obscure in its premise and tasteless in its point—but it was just in the familiar, bantering tone sometimes lighthearted, sometimes (a little forced) popular in the multiracial company of professional athletes. The sportswriters on duty in the press gallery knew Zoeller as an amiable clown, loutish but well-intentioned, and the remark didn't arouse their political suspicions. One of them took note of it.

The television cameras were more general-minded and less tolerant. Five days later CNN broadcast a clip of the clumsy witticism, instantly transforming Zoeller the bumbling joker into Zoeller the Neanderthal idiot. High-minded newspaper columnists in New York and Washington handed down writs of summary

judgment, and before the week was out Kmart, the retailer that employed Zoeller to endorse its golf equipment, deemed him no longer fit to be seen standing in the aisles of an outlet store with the lawn mowers, the suntan lotion, and the dog food.

Pursuant to the iron laws of wholesome cliché that govern the kingdom of big-time sports, Zoeller's punishment was neither cruel nor unusual. As long ago as 1988, CBS dismissed as one of its sportscasters the Las Vegas oddsmaker Jimmy the Greek for remarking on the physical differences between black men and white men, and as recently as last March the National Basketball Association levied fines on both John Calipari, the coach of the New York Nets—for characterizing a sportswriter as a "Mexican idiot"—and David Halberstam, a Miami Heat radio announcer—for drawing a parallel between modern basketball teams and Thomas Jefferson's gang of field slaves.

The masters of the nation's games obviously can't afford any smudging of preferred images, a practice that if allowed to proceed unchecked might depress ticket sales and confuse the bards at *Sports Illustrated*. They tend to make more abrupt decisions and inflict more severe penalties than their peers in the movie business and the publishing trades, but the fear of ill-groomed expression shows up in all sectors of the public conversation—in political debates careful to keep to the rules of "civility," in the universities bound by the codes of "political correctness" (as recommended both by the apostles of the multicultural left and the defenders

of the Eurocentric right), in the corporate annual reports that conceal the mechanics of the business (often a matter of gutting the suckers like so many chickens) behind the lovingly illustrated displays of affection for all our wonderful friends and satisfied customers at play in the meadows of the global future.

As the regulation of offensive speech has become increasingly strict over the last ten or fifteen years, the list of proscribed words and phrases has become correspondingly long, and by the age of ten most true and loyal Americans learn that when in the company of strangers or a television camera, it is never wise to tell careless jokes, mention watermelons, or bring up questions of sexual preference. A motley quorum of designated humorists, among them Howard Stern and Dennis Rodman, retain the right to affront the society's delicacy of feeling, but everybody else does so at his or her peril. Dr. Joycelyn Elders was cashiered as surgeon general of the United States in December 1994 after she uttered the word "masturbation," and even so celebrated a newspaper columnist as Jimmy Breslin was sent home for two weeks (presumably to wash out his mouth with soap) after referring—in conversation, not in print—to a fellow reporter at *Newsday* as a "yellow cur."

Prior to Zoeller's blunder on the eighteenth green at Augusta National, I had thought our skittishness about language followed from our deference to money. Accustomed to



the forms of speech that depend on the telling of more or less competent lies (construed as advertising slogans, legal briefs, political campaign promises, insurance policies, divorce agreements, tax returns), we take for granted the discounted prices paid for truth and unlicensed humor. Words move the merchandise, and when the important money in the room admits to a liking for carrots, the attending knights and squires begin to talk about Peter Rabbit and gardens in Connecticut. If over a period of time the practice of commercial dishonesty leads to the habit of intellectual dishonesty, well, that is one of the costs of doing business in a competitive world suddenly crowded with treacherous Arabs and unscrupulous Chinese.

But because most of the commentary about Zoeller's expulsion into the unsponsored wilderness made no distinction between the means of expression (what Zoeller said) and the acts of doing (the practice of racial discrimination in the United States), I wondered whether we might not have found an even more primitive use for language—words deployed not merely as sales pitch but also as exorcism and incantation, the higher orders of euphemism invested with the power to correct the condition that they seek to conceal. Silence all the Fuzzy Zoellers in the world apt to mention fried chicken in conjunction with the name of a black man, and the weight of racial injustice will lift and vanish from the earth with the mist rising through the Georgia pines.

The faith in supernatural words is marvelous to behold, and during the same few days that Zoeller figured briefly in the news a good many of the stories elsewhere in the paper offered further testimonies to the preference for magical thinking. On Capitol Hill an impressive number of Republican congressmen were holding stolidly to the belief that by their sustained and earnest repetition of the words "balanced budget" they could restore the American economy to a state of fiscal grace. Although not yet swinging incense pots or walking around in circles, they disdained to listen to people

who pointed out that the arithmetic makes no sense, that a government forced to balance current revenues and expenditures would cease operations in a matter of weeks. Nor were they to be troubled with the nuisance of real numbers. What they apparently had in mind was the salvation of souls, and having defined debt as sin, they had gone forth to the conviction that the federal budget resembles the monthly checkbook kept by the upright father of an exemplary American family (two sons, two daughters, six Bibles) living on a picture-postcard farm (twelve cows, three cornfields, twenty-seven pigs) back home in nineteenth-century Indiana. The farm prospered and the sons grew up to be clergymen because the father never borrowed a dime. Let the federal government do likewise, and all the crooked tax deals in Washington will lift as gracefully from the earth as the white-winged waterbirds rising from the marshes of the Potomac.

President Clinton meanwhile was traveling in Mexico with the glorious news that the United States would continue to send large sums of money to that happy and prosperous democracy because Mexico, once again, had proved itself a staunch and worthy ally in the war against drugs. The President's reassuring words suppressed the less reassuring facts—e.g., that last February the commander of the Mexican antidrug forces, General Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo, had been arrested for supplying information to one of the Mexican drug cartels; or that the cocaine shipments through Mexico from Peru to the American border provide at least \$6 billion a year in bribes to favorably placed officials in the Mexican oligarchy. Why spoil a sunny afternoon in romantic old Mexico with dismal memories and melancholy doubts?

The front-page dispatch to the *New York Times* didn't list the names of the President's traveling companions, but Maureen Dowd mentioned the President's newly acquired friendship with Robert H. Schuller, pastor of the Crystal Cathedral in Orange County, California, and had the Reverend been present he no doubt would have helped everybody

through what must have been a difficult day by reciting one of his cheerful slogans—"Turn your hurt into your halo," or, more triumphantly, "God plus me equals a majority."

As with the war on debt, the war on drugs is made of words, then so was the Bre-X mine in Indonesia, and while President Clinton was stopping the Mexican cocaine trade with a force of heavily armed veterans, the holders of stock in Bre-X were trying to figure out what price they had paid for their faith in a magical noun. The newspapers offered different understandings of the large lessons to be learned—how and why 200 million ounces of gold had vanished overnight—but on the outcome of the story all the reports agreed:

A Canadian stock promoter by the name of David G. Walsh, a certified man who never once in his life had prospected for anything, not even for quartz or lead, ventured into the jungles of Borneo in 1993 and there, along the banks of Bushy Creek, he discovered, much to his wonder and delight, the richest gold mine in the world. Although he was bankrupt at the time, and the stock in Bre-X, his exploration company, was trading on the Canadian stock exchange at two cents a share, the trepid Walsh persevered, overcoming immense obstacles (fires, snakes, malaria, corrupt Indonesian mining officials), fortunate to engage the services of two clairvoyant geologists who knew how to divine the presence of precious metals in what they called "the footprints of volcanoes." For the better part of four years Walsh and his geologists (Michael de Guzman and John Felderhoff) drilled holes and collected core samples; they didn't mine gold in commercial quantity, but their estimates of the worth and size of what they had found moved ever upward from 30 million ounces to 40 million ounces, then to 70 million ounces and lastly to 200 million ounces. The price of Bre-X stock rose on a parallel curve, from two cents a share to \$50 a share to \$200 a share. Content to believe Walsh's fantastic story, none of the buyers of the stock



among them mutual-fund managers (Fidelity Investments, Invesco, and American Express) sought to verify the geology. A lot of stockholders were making a lot of money, and why spoil a romantic interlude in the mysterious Orient with foolish questions and dismal facts?

But then, alas, it came time to prove the existence of the gold to somebody other than Walsh and his geologists, and so de Guzman was sent, presumably with a bag of first-class ore, to the mining company hired to operate the mine. Unfortunately, he fell out of the helicopter (ringing him to the appointment nobody yet knows why), and soon afterward the price of Bre-X shares on the Toronto Stock Exchange dropped at an equally sudden rate—\$3 billion, or 80 percent of the company's value, lost in less than half an hour.

Trading in the stock had been suspended at \$1.95 a share when President Clinton returned to Washington to find the Republican congressmen still murmuring the sacred budget chant and the Department of Health and Human Services busily at work on a similar ceremony involving sustained repetitions of the word "abstinence." The newly revised welfare laws allow the government to divide \$250 million among those states and school districts that agree to indoctrinate their students with the belief that any and all sexual acts taking place outside the bonds of marriage were "likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects." The teaching was to be presented as a law of nature—repeated every day, no ambiguous exceptions to the rule, no loose talk about contraception, no alternative paths to virtue. A few of the state and school officials quoted in the papers thought that maybe the terms of the agreement were a trifle rigid, not to say narrow-minded and cruel, but among the nation's 16,000 school districts, 4,000 already provide an "abstinence only" curriculum, buttressed by educational videos in which, when a student asks, "What if I want to have sex before I get married?" the instructor replies, "Well, I guess you'll just have to be prepared to die. And you'll probably take with

you your spouse and one or more of your children."

By the second week in May, the story of Zoeller's transgression had drifted over the horizon of the news with the stories about the fictitious budget and the nonexistent Mexican drug trade, and on a plane to Rome I could find nothing in the papers about the Reverend Schuller or the Bre-X mine.

But the line of thought that I'd been chasing for several days was implicit in the ruins of the old Roman empire, which gradually destroyed itself by substituting the faith in a legion of miraculous words for the strength of armies and the weight of walls. Walking one afternoon on the Palatine Hill among the broken stones that once burnished the glory of the Emperor Domitian, I knew that had I been present on that same height at the end of the first century A.D., I would have been slow to question the welcome lies told by Chaldean soothsayers or the masters of the Colosseum's gladiatorial shows. The world was Rome's toy, and who could doubt the immortality of the empire? The governors of distant provinces exacted tribute from the lesser peoples of the earth by means not unlike those of our own transnational corporations, and a favorite charioteer in the Circus Maximus earned as much from a day of successful racing as the winner of this year's Masters. The gentry on the Palatine Hill learned over time that humor was as dangerous a commodity as truth, and we can assume that the conversation was enlightened, tactful, well-groomed, in all ways politically and demographically correct. Domitian inclined to testiness, and he was in the habit of executing people who committed the crimes of offensive speech. Actors who made jokes as witless as Zoeller's were torn to pieces by dogs.

Standing on what little was left of a marble pavement that once supported a temple of Apollo, I couldn't remember which words the Romans translated into wands and wishbones, but presumably they relied on a corollary faith in the first-century avatars of Deepak Chopra and the

**"IN MOST FAMILIES,  
IT IS THE CHILDREN  
WHO LEAVE HOME.  
IN MINE, IT WAS  
THE PARENTS."**

—Gillian Slovo



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SECRET  
THING**

*My Family,  
My Country*

**GILLIAN  
SLOVO**



Little, Brown and Company



28 **THE IMPERIAL KUNGLICHE KUNST- UND**



# HARPER'S INDEX

- Number of years that "dancing will continue" in Hong Kong, according to Chinese officials : 50
- Chance that a Hong Kong resident is "very worried" about the loss of personal freedom under Chinese rule : 1 in 20
- Chance that a Hong Kong resident is very worried about increased corruption : 1 in 6
- Percentage change since 1995 in the number of Chinese Embassy staffers assigned to U.S. congressional relations : +100
- Number of speeches on campaign reform delivered in the U.S. Congress since 1987 : 3,361
- Number of months before hiring Bob Dole last May that a D.C. law firm represented its first tobacco company : 4
- Number of weeks after being hired that Dole announced he would loan Newt Gingrich \$300,000 to pay his ethics fine : 2
- Number of U.S. law firms involved in tobacco suits : 530
- Percentage of American smokers who say that tobacco companies are to blame for smoking-related illnesses : 13
- Percentage of Americans who have never smoked who say this : 22
- Amount raised for Cuban health care in Havana last February at a government auction of Cohiba premium cigars : \$540,000
- Estimated portion of all medicinal drugs invented since 1980 that are unavailable in Cuba due to the U.S. embargo : 1/2
- Number of CIA informants laid off since 1995 : 1,000
- Number of years the U.S. Army estimates that its supply of sand-colored, aircraft-size camouflage coverings will last : 159
- Chance that a U.N. peacekeeper comes from a G-7 country : 1 in 8
- Percentage change since 1990 in minutes of network news devoted to stories broadcast from foreign bureaus : -59
- Chance that an American believes freedom of the press should be "protected under all circumstances" : 1 in 3
- Chance that an American cannot name a single right protected by the First Amendment : 1 in 3
- Ratio of Californians who voted to legalize medical marijuana last year to those who voted for Bill Clinton : 21:20
- Year in which current ideas of normalcy may be seen as "pathology," according to a U.S. pharmaceutical executive : 2016
- Portion of the world's population that he believes might then be prescribed psychiatric drugs : 1/3
- Rank of Catwoman among the "superheroes" American boys under the age of ten say they would most like to be : 1
- Number of the four best-selling classical music albums of all time that are collections put out by Victoria's Secret : 2
- Ratio of the budget of the film *Volcano* to the property damage caused by the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helen's : 1:1
- Number of years since 1988 in which natural disasters have cost U.S. insurers at least \$1 billion : 9
- Number of years prior to 1988 in which this occurred : 0
- Percentage change since 1960 in the number of Americans living in the 4 states most prone to natural disasters : +100
- Average number of nonnative insect species entering Hawaii each year : 17.5
- Portion of New England's feral honey-bee population lost to Asian mites since 1995 : 9/10
- Portion of Yellowstone's bison herd killed after straying beyond park boundaries this year : 1/3
- Number of buffalo-meat hot dogs sold per baseball game at Atlanta's Turner Field last summer : 2,350
- Maximum fine for bringing one stick of chewing gum into Singapore : \$10,000
- Rank of chicken feet among Chinese moviegoers' favorite snacks : 1
- Percentage of British fluid intake that is tea : 42
- Number of years British Prime Minister Tony Blair served as lead singer of the rock band Ugly Rumours : 2
- Number of romance novels Dame Barbara Cartland has written since 1923 : 550 (see page 27)
- Lines of Walt Whitman poetry entered as evidence last year in New York's dispute with New Jersey over Ellis Island : 37
- Average number of fireworks launched per second in New York City's 1977 July 4 display : 4
- Average number to be launched per second this year : 8

Figures cited have been carefully researched and are the latest available as of May 1997. Sources are listed on page 81.  
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# READINGS

[Speech]

## WILL LIES SET YOU FREE?

*From "On Taking the Cosby Case," a speech given in May by Gerry Spence at the Trial Lawyers College in Dubois, Wyoming. Spence, who did not become involved in the Cosby case, has been an attorney for forty-five years; his clients have included Karen Silkwood, Randy Weaver, and Imelda Marcos. He is the author, most recently, of The Making of a Country Lawyer, published by St. Martin's Press.*

**T**he lawyer tracked me down in Mexico. He had been out of law school for three years. He'd never had a jury trial, much less a death-penalty case. "They'll kill my client," he said. "They'll put the needle in his arm." He asked if I would help him, if I would represent his client, who'd been charged with the murder of Ennis Cosby.

"He's a nice-looking boy. Eighteen. Tall, thin, broad-shouldered. You'd like him. Already the papers are carrying stories quoting people who know him. They say he could not have killed the Cosby boy. Not Mikhail Markhasev."

I don't like death-penalty cases. They make me have nightmares. I watch them strap my client down; then a man with a mask hiding his face begins to insert the needle. In my dreams it isn't the state that kills my client. It is me. I killed him when I failed to understand

some problem in the case, when I failed to find the answers that could have saved his life.

And this case is even more complicated and more troubling than most, because it involves the dead son of a beloved star, and a whole country wants revenge.

Also, the police need a conviction. In their report they said they had "mountains of evidence." The ballistics fit the gun, and the gun, they claimed, belonged to the defendant. And the police had certain witnesses. A large reward had been offered. Likely they had a snitch ready to tell the whole story, the Judas goat that would lead the lamb, guilty or not, to slaughter.

**O**f course, the question at the marrow is: Did the boy do it? A cautious lawyer does not ask that question, not at first. What if you say to the kid caught in that wretched trap, "I need to know the truth, son. I'm your lawyer." And the boy, having lain rotting in some dank cell all those months, alone, afraid, without friends or family, bursts out with it. "I did it. Yes, I did it." What, then, does the honorable lawyer do?

Now that you know your client is guilty, how can you put him on the stand? You know that he will lie when the prosecutor demands, on cross-examination, "Where were you on the night when Ennis Cosby was killed in cold blood?" And later, when you put him on the stand, you'll have to ask a similar question. So you will be asking him to lie. You are taking part in the lying. And an ethical trial lawyer must not solemn perjury.

If a trial is something more than a game,



something more than throwing two lawyers into the ring to fight it out with clever tactics and words that form a privileged fiction, why should any guilty defendant be permitted to take the stand and spill his bucket of lies to the jury? If a trial is a "search for the truth," then why should any accused who has confessed his guilt to his lawyer be permitted to testify? In the end, the sophisticated, hardened, jailhouse criminal will get the better defense, for he knows better than to tell his lawyer the truth. The hardened criminal's lawyer, whose client has consistently proclaimed his innocence, is now free—duty bound, even—to put his client on the stand to shower the jury with whatever lies the client has concocted.

But the street of truth allegedly runs in both directions. The state's attorney, too, must not knowingly feed false testimony to the jury. But false testimony flies into the state's case like bats through an open door. In my career in the courtroom I have yet to defend a criminal case that was not laced with false testimony. Nearly always I encounter evidence offered by the prosecutor that is only half true, testimony that is slanted so that every innocent fact is given an evil connotation. If the accused went to the bathroom on the night of the crime, he went

there, according to the state, to load the gun. Worse, in many cases I see out-and-out perjury, manufactured evidence, lying experts. And the prosecutor himself knows that his case is more historical fiction than truth—it is a form of narrative, one based on fact but created and presented in such a light as to ensure the conviction of the accused.

In real life, the state's attorneys are as free as schoolboys to present any case they want. Who will catch them? Still, they sell their fiction to juries out of pure hearts. What do small lies hurt, even large ones, if that is what is necessary to convict a guilty man? If the typical prosecutor were to stagger into a courtroom intoxicated with truth serum he would shout, "We are prosecuting a guilty man. We will do whatever is necessary to convict the filthy felon! We will lie if we must. For what is the greater harm: our honorable lies or his heinous, unpunished crimes?"

In contrast, there stands the defense attorney—"the slime in the baggy-kneed suit pants. He's as bad as the murderer. He's an accessory after the fact, the worst liar of them all."

"How can you defend those people?" I am always asked. Here is the series of Socratic questions I pose in response:

"Well, do you think the defendant should have a trial before we hang him?"

"Yes, of course," they reply.

"In that case, should it be a fair trial?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"If it is to be a fair trial, should the accused be provided an attorney?"

"Well, of course."

"If he is to be provided an attorney, should the attorney be competent?"

"Yes," they admit.

"Should he be honorable?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, if the defense attorney knows that the defendant is guilty, should he try to lose the case?"

"No. That would deprive the defendant of his fair trial. That would be dishonorable."

"If he does not try to lose the case, should he do his best to make the prosecution prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt?"

"Yes. That is his job."

"And if he does his best, and the prosecution fails to prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt, and the jury acquits the guilty accused, who do you blame? Do you blame the defense attorney who has done his job, or the prosecutor who has not?"

But the prosecution's tricks never end. The sheriff will put some miserable thug into the same cell with the defendant, and, for a sweet deal, the thug will testify in court that the de-

[Précis]

## THE ESSENTIAL DICK MORRIS

*The following summary of the first chapter of Behind the Oval Office, by Dick Morris, was generated by AutoSummarize, a feature of Microsoft's Word 97 software. AutoSummarize assigns each word in a document a ranking based on the frequency of its appearance; it then composes a summary using the sentences from the text that contain the largest ratio of high-ranking words. The summary below appeared in the February 8 issue of Slate, an online magazine.*

**T**he President. President Clinton didn't need Haitian refugees swarming over our beaches. I called Clinton day after day. Bill Clinton was my ticket up. Clinton agreed. Intellectually, polls offer Clinton an insight into how people think. President Clinton was in deep, deep trouble. Never. Clinton wasn't interested. It was Clinton.





"Bang," by Kerry James Marshall. His work is currently on display at Museum Fridericianum in Kassel, Germany. Marshall lives in Chicago.

fendant confessed the killing to him. It is nearly standard fare. Always the state is free to buy the testimony it needs to convict the defendant. It will release a vicious killer in order to convict another. It will put professional liars into witness-protection programs, give them new names and identities, money, immunity, whatever it takes to buy their testimony. The prosecutors call their own police, their own technicians, their own coroners, their own ballistics experts, their own criminologists, and this team, wearing the same color jerseys, will slant the testimony, omitting that which is damning to their case and hiding that which will acquit. They will do so not because they are evil but because they are members of a team and that is their job. They are engaged

not in a search for truth, but in a mission to convict.

**W**hat chance, guilty or innocent, for Mikhail Markhasev have the prosecutors?

no money. He has only a working mother whose total assets wouldn't buy a week's worth of billing from most lawyers. So what he'll get is a public defender who has a hundred other cases awaiting trial.

On the other side is a famous American whose son was brutally murdered. We want to give him solace, and we want to seek revenge. We ourselves harbor a deep fear of such senseless, random killings.

But this is also a case of black versus white, and in the post-O.J. universe we have to ask if it's possible in this instance to play the "race card." If the state files the case in downtown L.A., the boy will get a predominantly black jury, and that jury will convict. On the other hand, is it possible to get a sympathetic white Santa Monica jury that will do for him what the sympathetic black L.A. jury did for O.J.?

The answer is no. This defendant is Ukrainian. His foreign-born mother speaks with an accent. They say you can detect a slight tinge of it





*From Vocations, a series of paintings by Steven Skollan. The series was on display in May at Bridgewater/Lustberg Gallery in New York City.*

in the boy's speech if you listen carefully—enough, perhaps, to trigger the American suspicion of foreigners. And for the white jurors another dynamic is at work: it is their chance to stand in stark contrast to the Simpson jurors, whom the white American public has so vilified. It will be easy for white jurors to claim some moral high ground and deliver justice to a beloved entertainer. How, in such an environment, can one imagine a fair trial? Guilty or innocent, how do you save the boy's life?

**S**ometimes I wonder if honorable defense attorneys have any business being in court. If a defense attorney fully embraces the ethics of his profession, if he refuses to resort to his own set of tricks, then the trial becomes like the two fighters in the ring, only one of whom is authorized to strike low blows. The defendant's lawyer is charged with providing the accused with his sacred right to a fair trial, which includes the demand that the state prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt. Does not the defendant's story, true or false, test the heart of the

state's case? Ought not the state's lies be countered with the lies of the defendant? And ought not the state still be required—in the face of those lies—to prove its case? If the state cannot prove its case in the face of the defendant's false story, how can the state claim that it has met its burden of proof? If the state is allowed to lie and the defendant is not, then hasn't the burden of proof been shifted onto the defendant to prove that the *state* is lying? And does that not undermine the foundations of justice that our trial system was built on? It's easy, you see, to rationalize lying in the courtroom.

Still, we understand that the pursuit of justice cannot be reduced to storytelling. Despite our cynicism, a trial is a search for truth. We need to recommit ourselves to the faith that the state must bear its burden and prove—with honest evidence—its case against the accused beyond a reasonable doubt, and that the defendant's attorney cannot take part in presenting the perjured story of his client to the jury.

When we use prejudice to convict or acquit, when we fiddle with the facts, it is not only the guilty who suffer. For if we can kill out of fear,



out of our hatred of the accused or our compassion for the victim, if we can convict because forces other than the untainted facts compel us to convict, we all will ultimately suffer. And so the lawyer in the baggy-kneed pants who walks into the courtroom honestly defending the guilty also defends the innocent. He preserves the system. He makes the powerful state always prove its case against the powerless.

The voice of the young lawyer still rings in my ear. "They will stick the needle in his arm," I hear him say. And I feel the old familiar fear begin to knot in my own belly.

[Advice]

## THE WHITE-COLLAR CRIMINAL'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

*From Doing Federal Time: A Handbook for Businessmen Who Are Facing Federal White Collar Criminal Charges, self-published by Ronald TerMeer. TerMeer was convicted in 1992 of embezzling from a large regional bank in the Midwest where he worked as a controller; he spent eighteen months at the Federal Correctional Institution in Morgantown, West Virginia, a minimum-security facility.*

**W**hite-collar criminals do not really deserve to go to jail. Prison is expensive and, for such criminals, serves no useful purpose. These nonviolent crimes would be punished more suitably through community service or by paying fines. Still, the U.S. government continues to waste money pursuing and locking up white-collar criminals.

That means that whatever your white-collar crime—bank fraud, mail fraud, money laundering, tax evasion—there's a good chance you'll wind up getting caught. Some event will trigger the final fall. Your scam comes tumbling down, and suddenly you are faced with the consequences. It may be happening as you read this.

You will likely be arrested. Before this happens, you need to address the situation with your family. This will be difficult, particularly if the news of your criminal behavior comes as a shock to them. Keep to a game plan; anticipate their questions and have answers ready.

In the weeks before your indictment, make sure to spend quality time with your wife and children. You will miss them later.

After you are arraigned and sentenced, you may, if all goes well, qualify for self-surrender

to the U.S. marshals. There are several advantages to self-surrender. The most significant is avoiding doing time in a county jail. These facilities are generally overcrowded, dirty, and full of people you do not want to be around.

Before you leave for prison, find out what things you can bring with you. Depending on where you are sent, you may be able to take your street clothes. Bring your pajamas. Pack your bathrobe (don't forget the belt). For leisure, bring a couple of sweat suits. Be practical, not fashionable.

**F**or those of us who know what the good life is like, there is nothing easy about serving federal time. The only advice I recall ever getting in terms of what to expect was, "It won't be as bad as you think." But if you are a white-collar professional, understand that your lifestyle will be changing drastically.

Whether you are going to a minimum-security facility or to a federal prison camp, there is one question that will loom large in your mind: Will I be safe? You can rest assured that at this level of federal prison, physical safety is not a concern. The types of people put in these facilities do not have a history of violence and usually are first-time offenders or probation violators.

That does not mean that you will not experience a high level of emotional stress. Federal correctional officers like to be abrasive. They have a tendency to be very petty and to use their authority to badger many prisoners. Learn to be tolerant of frustrated ex-military men and overpaid rent-a-cops.

In minimum-security institutions the living conditions are generally dormitory style. Bunk assignments are based on seniority. Expect to be assigned a top bunk when you arrive. You may be able to avoid this if you can get a medical release for back problems or heart trouble. Otherwise, get ready to climb up top for a few months.

Be prepared for a noisy environment. The federal system is overcrowded with young, boisterous drug dealers. Most of the crowd is rude and inconsiderate. Card games extend late into the night. Many of the guys are frustrated performers who love to hear themselves sing; others snore at high decibel levels.

As far as meals are concerned, plan to adjust your eating habits. There are three meals a day, but portions are generally skimpy. My advice is to eat a little bit of something at every meal to avoid going hungry. For breakfast, dry cereal is probably your best bet (the eggs are usually powdered). Do not get your hopes up for any fancy brands. Corn Flakes, Rice Krispies, and Cheerios are as good as it gets. Dinner is probably the most skippable meal of



the flip-flopping of the meat dish—most knives will not cut through the grade of meat served in prison.

For recreation, basketball and softball are available. Outdoor walking and jogging are also

popular. Keep in mind: your time in prison represents an opportunity to get yourself back in good physical condition.

Every inmate gets a work assignment. The nature of your assignment can determine the quality of your lifestyle while in prison. There are some extremely ugly kitchen jobs. The more desirable assignments are clerk positions; if your background is in office work, you will be comfortable in these assignments. I rate the two biggest advantages of a clerk's job in prison as heat in the winter and air-conditioning in the summer. The key is to seek out and find a job before you are assigned one. If you get stuck in food service, God forbid, you might work evenings, weekends, you name it.

Doing federal time will be a difficult and frustrating experience. Your greatest obstacle will be time itself. There will be days that seem to last forever. You can do "hard time" or "easy time"—it all depends on your attitude and approach. Work on your physical, emotional, and spiritual health while in prison.

Good luck. The time will pass. Try to make the best of an unfortunate situation.

[Warning: Stuns]

## OFFICE PSYCHOS: A CHECKLIST

*From "Profile of a Workplace Killer," by forensic psychiatrist Dr. Martin Blinder, in the weekly Manager's Journal column of the February 10 Wall Street Journal. According to Blinder, the following traits are among the "yellow flags" management can use to identify "those employees most likely to engage in lethal acts of revenge."*

**W**orkplace killers are profoundly narcissistic, holding themselves up as superior, and may be inclined to such pronouncements as "Where do you get off criticizing me?" or "How dare you fire me?"

They interpret everyday events in an idiosyncratic and pernicious way. They are repeatedly offended by "slights" and are convinced that they are surrounded by "enemies."

They are prone to multiple gun ownership and exhibit excessive interest in paramilitary groups, law enforcement, survivalist organizations, fascist history, etc.

They have what coworkers describe as "sour personalities."

They have drawers and boxes full of legal documents, which they are convinced prove their constant grievances.

They harbor persistent and inappropriate anger. Often they express great interest in and approval of violent acts reported in the press: spousal abuse, shooting sprees, capital punishment, etc.

They are utterly humorless. Should they attempt a joke, it typically involves an inappropriate subject—drunkenness, the Holocaust, etc.

They make cryptic but ominous statements, such as "Sooner or later everybody get theirs."

[Testimony]

## THE IRS WALK OF FAME

*From the transcript of United States of America v. Robert M. Patterson, a trial held in April 1996 at the U.S. District Court in Memphis. Patterson, who worked for the Internal Revenue Service from 1985 until 1996, was charged with illegally accessing and reading tax records. Patterson told investigators that the regular duties of his job, which involved entering taxpayer names and other information into a computer, "began to get old" and that accessing the accounts "kept me sane." Patterson was questioned by his attorney, Beth Brooks, he was later acquitted of the charges.*

**BETH BROOKS:** Beginning in April of 1992, shortly after you moved to the night shift, did you begin to try to train yourself on the computer?

**ROBERT M. PATTERSON:** Yes, ma'am. I would punch in celebrity names or names I saw in the newspaper, names I saw on TV, names that just came into my head. I really wasn't going in there with any malicious intent, I was just trying to teach myself. And you know, when something came up on the screen, I would look at it, see what happened, and then I would go on to the next





from "Drinking Can Break Your Heart," a poster campaign created by the Dutch government to combat the problem of "young people drinking to excess." The campaign, which Dutch alcohol producers have strongly opposed, centers on the link between drinking and domestic violence. One poster in the series already has been withdrawn. In the poster at right, a "cola-tik" refers to any alcoholic drink mixed with cola; in Dutch, a "tik" is a blow to the face.

name. Once I had Elvis Presley—it was for an estate or a trust or something. It surprised me, because he has been dead—how many, almost eighteen, nineteen years. I thought, it must be somebody with that same name. Then I got it in my mind: Wouldn't it be funny if there were people with those names, and I just punched in Karen Carpenter to see if there were really people named Karen Carpenter, and I got a whole page of them. You know, I just thought that was odd.

BROOKS: All right. Do you recall whether you had a legitimate purpose that you can remember for accessing other files? For example, Wynonna Judd. Do you remember?

PATTERSON: No.

BROOKS: Naomi Judd?

PATTERSON: No. I had country singers often.

BROOKS: Okay. But you can't say whether you did or did not have a legitimate purpose?

PATTERSON: (Shaking head negatively)

BROOKS: Garth Brooks?

PATTERSON: (Shaking head negatively)

BROOKS: Okay. Traci Lords?

PATTERSON: (Shaking head negatively)

BROOKS: Bryan Adams? Does that ring a bell?

PATTERSON: I can't say about that. I don't remember.

BROOKS: Do you remember anything about Hal Holbrook?

PATTERSON: No, ma'am.

BROOKS: Do you remember anything about Elizabeth Taylor?

PATTERSON: No, ma'am.

BROOKS: Michael—

PATTERSON: Now, Elizabeth Taylor, that would be like another Karen Carpenter situation.

BROOKS: What about Michael Jordan?

PATTERSON: (Shaking head negatively)

BROOKS: Dixie Carter?

PATTERSON: No, ma'am.

BROOKS: What about David Duke?

PATTERSON: David Duke came up during the political campaign year of '92.

BROOKS: So you think that was a legitimate purpose on campaign checking?

PATTERSON: Yes, ma'am.

BROOKS: Okay. Tom Cruise?

PATTERSON: (Shaking head negatively)

BROOKS: John Grisham?



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[PAUSE] "No, in film.  
 [PAUSE] "No, in speech."  
 [PAUSE] "And he's not actually."  
 [PAUSE] "Lawrence Well."  
 [PAUSE] "No, in film."  
 [PAUSE] "Lucille Ball."  
 [PAUSE] "No."  
 [PAUSE] "Desi Arnaz."  
 [PAUSE] "Well, see, Lucy—these movie stars  
 like Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz, they're not go-  
 ing to show up, because they're not even in  
 our district. I was just looking to see if any-  
 body else had those names."  
 [PAUSE] "Clark Gable."  
 [PAUSE] "He has been dead, you know."  
 BROOKS: Okay. Lisa Presley?  
 [PAUSE] "No. You see, those two go together—  
 Lisa and Elvis Presley. If you get into estates,  
 I knew that she has control of his estate  
 now, so I would have to check her out too."

[Account]

## IN THE MONEY: A CONGRESSMAN'S STORY

*From "Inside the Money Chase," by former United States Representative Dan Hamburg, in the May 5 issue of The Nation. Hamburg served in Congress as a California Democrat from 1993 to 1995. He is now executive director of VOTE Action Committee and a member of the Green Party.*

**M**A wife and I have a favorite saying about the choices we make in our lives: "It's not the money." To me, getting money to make my first run for Congress in 1992 was simply something I needed to do to win. I certainly never intended to become the least bit impressed with it or driven by it. After getting elected, I was sure I could be a freewheeling progressive "Johnny" who I believed would be lions of my kind in the new Congress and a Democratic administration, we would begin to put the country right.

Before I ran for Congress, I had never raised more than \$15,000 for a political race. But I knew that congressional seats didn't come cheap, so I contacted an old supporter, musician Bonnie Raitt, and asked her to help me raise money for my campaign. To my elation, she said yes, and I was off and running.

Bonnie did several concerts for me in early 1992, and a total of about \$60,000. It turned

out, incredibly, that no one challenged me in the spring primary. I remember thinking that the money would now flow like wine. It was exciting. I had already caught money fever. But by June of that year, I was broke, my campaign-management team having used virtually all of the money for their salaries and expenses. My campaign manager put it this way: "As a candidate you have two jobs—carry the message and raise money." It was time to raise more. I was learning my job.

I raised another \$800,000 or so for the general election. Bonnie helped raise a chunk of that by doing a blockbuster concert with Jackson Browne on the driving range of a Napa country-club golf course. Where did the rest of the money come from? Environmentalists. Labor. Women. Peace and justice organizations. That was my mantra whenever anybody asked me where the money was coming from. I said it with pride, as if cool people got cool money and everything was cool.

Pretty quickly I lost track of where much of the money was coming from. I was far too busy trying to cover my sprawling seven-county district and secure the funds needed to keep an ever-expanding campaign team in place. Some money came from wealthy individuals who were known to me simply as "major donors," some from state and national parties, some from Democratic incumbents hoping to maintain a majority in the House. And of course some—about a third of it—came from PACs. At one point, at the urging of Democratic Representative Bill Brewster, I found myself talking to the NRA about giving me money because my opponent had voted to restrict sales of automatic weapons. Ultimately they did not offer me any money but agreed not to fund my opponent either.

By the time I won the general election that November, the campaign was in debt about \$80,000 and I was personally in debt another \$40,000. But hell, I'd raised nearly a million and now I was the incumbent, so no sweat! Still, it took nearly all of 1993 to clear my '92 campaign expenses, since in off years (years in which there is not a House election) much of the fund-raising has to be done at in-district events where supporters pay to hear the incumbent expound on the political wars in D.C.

In September 1993, I went to the White House to see the President and Vice President. This was a small meeting, which also included about eight members of Congress, George Stephanopoulos, and David Gergen. The day before, I had been at the annual picnic of the Operating Engineers, a union that had "maxed out" to me (\$5,000 each for primary and general elections). At the picnic, several of the union leaders spoke to me about a problem





*"New York City from Brooklyn," by James Fee, from his series Road. Fee's work will be on display in September at the Prinz Gallery in Kyoto, Japan. He lives in Los Angeles.*

they were having—getting the go-ahead for a freeway-widening project in the district. I said I'd do what I could. The next day, there I was at the White House, arguing for more money for "infrastructure," including, of course, the project the Operating Engineers were pushing.

This is the kind of thing members of Congress do routinely. After all, this is how the system is supposed to work. The member goes out into the district, talks to his constituents, finds out what they need, and then fights to get it, especially if it's for a group that's good for \$10,000 in the next election. I knew lots of reasons that the widening project was a bad idea, at best unnecessary. In fact, as a county official, I had voted against it several times. But it wasn't hard to conjure up reasons to be *for* it either: primarily, jobs and campaign money.

Since a "successful politician" is a politician with a healthy bankroll, behaviors that one might think of as degrading to the profes-

sion or detrimental to democracy are to the politician both legitimate and necessary. All the rewards come with raising tons of money—pundits laud your "prolific fund-raising," colleagues have confidence in your viability (i.e., re-electability), staff members need not fear for their jobs.

Members of Congress spend hours each week and, during campaign season, hours each day, making fund-raising calls from private offices on Capitol Hill. "Making your calls" is a basic responsibility of the job. And despite all the whitewash, the fact is that campaign fund-raising calls are routinely made from federal offices. (When I entered Congress, I was advised that while it was illegal to make such calls from my congressional office, it was legal to accept return calls. Of course, even this phony line is frequently crossed.)

The unending hunt for money also shapes relations between individual members once they are in Congress. Many long-term incumbents are not only able to fund their own re-





*"Jump Shot," by Paul D'Amato. His work was on display last summer at the Portland Museum of Art in Portland, Maine, where D'Amato lives.*

election campaigns; they also manage to establish their own PACs to give money to other members. This is another way, besides the seniority system, that established politicians influence less established politicians. Several times I went to the floor of the House to seek out members (whose names I had typed on an index card) who were known to have money to hand out. These members might be ideological allies or might simply have ambitions to move up through the system by handing out \$1,000 checks.

At the end of my first term, it was no secret in the House that Charlie Rose of North Carolina intended, in the next term, to challenge Dick Gephardt for Democratic leader. His plan was to run against Gephardt during the party organizational period just before the 104th Congress commenced. I had an important bill before one of Rose's subcommittees, so I felt the need to have him as a friend. After all, he could kill my bill on a whim anytime he desired. Instead, Charlie took me under his wing and helped guide my bill toward passage. He also gave me \$1,000 from his personal PAC to

help me in an unexpected primary I faced in the spring of '94, a race in which my challenger spent at least \$250,000.

The next time I asked Charlie for money it was for the November general election. In the meantime, I had decided to support Gephardt, mostly because of his strong stance against NAFTA and his generally more liberal politics. I also knew that I was facing another million-dollar race. When I approached Charlie for money, his response was, "Son, you better get on over with your friend Gephardt. You won't see any more money coming from me." I felt so awkward and silly. Here I was, a grown man, a congressman, getting blown off for a lousy \$1,000.

Now that I am out of Congress, I watch both parties mired in controversy over the sources of campaign funds, and I view the events with a sense of familiarity. Money has been the dominant player in yet another election, and, as usual, there's been no accounting for it. And as I hear politicians speak of the need for campaign-finance reform, I wonder: Just what are they talking about? What are they prepared to



do? Turn off the spigot or, with much fanfare, simply redirect the flow?

The issue of campaign finance points to a deeper problem in U.S. politics: the subservience of all other issues of representation to economics. The real business of our nation's government is all too clearly dominated by large corporations. Fostering a secure environment in which corporations and their investors can flourish has long been the paramount objective of both parties. We ought to use the campaign-finance reform debate to consider how money works to place and keep in office those who willingly reproduce this culture.

[Report Card]

## THE LIFE OF A GUINEA PIG

From "Research Unit Report Cards," in issue number 2 of *Guinea Pig Zero: A Journal for Human Pharmaceutical Research Subjects*, published in Philadelphia. The zine, written by people whose primary source of income is volunteering for experiments, grades research laboratories around the country on their treatment of human subjects; the criteria for awarding a low mark include "payment below \$200 a day," "very bad food," and "evasion of responsibility when something goes wrong."

*Allegheny-Medical College of Pennsylvania*  
(Philadelphia)

Grade: F

This research unit has an overwhelming number of problems. They keep you waiting for half an hour for a simple blood draw. Sometimes they're sloppy with injections. And they nonchalantly change the dates of a study after you've been accepted: "Oh, didn't you hear? It's been moved to the twenty-first. That's not a problem, is it?" Respectable units will call you immediately and throw in \$100 for the hassle.

They don't give you a copy of the research protocol unless you ask for it. They do give you a consent form to sign for the screening routine, but it's the experiment itself—not the qualifying screen—that the guinea pig must give informed consent to. This dangerous game tries to manipulate you into thinking that a placebo document is the real McCoy.

This hellhole should be shut down for good!

*Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital* (New Brunswick, New Jersey)

Grade: B

The staffers are first-rate professionals and

are genuinely concerned with the guinea pig's quality of life. They don't keep you waiting around, and they're not obsessed with security. You can send out for pizza if the study allows greasy foods. But there are problems, notably that the equipment is from another age—you'll have to deal with manual blood-pressure cuffs and clumsy old suction cups on the EKG.

*SmithKline Beecham* (Philadelphia)

Grade: D

These people make their attitude clear the

[Endorsement]

## NEVER SURRENDER

From an interview with Dame Barbara Cartland in the April 2 issue of *The Guardian*, the London daily, prior to the elections that ousted Conservative Prime Minister John Major. Cartland is the stepgrandmother of Princess Diana and the author of 550 romance novels.

I will be voting for John Major. He is getting better and better every year. He is very, very good. He now speaks far better than he used to. He is learning to be a real leader. Look around. Who else is like the old leaders, like Winston?

I don't want to go in with Europe, and I am hoping the Conservatives won't. If we join Europe, we will find ourselves joined to other countries that we have beaten. Every single bank, telephone, and shop will have to be changed. Why do we want to alter things? It's appalling and crazy.

John Major came to lunch with me when he was first elected. He asked me what he should be doing. I said, "Take England back to what it was." When I was young, England was very, very strong. All people used to copy us abroad. Now no one does. They think we are silly fools.

The world has moved on, but badly. We need to go back to the days when everyone wanted to be a gentleman. Sleaze? What's that? I have never heard of sleaze. My grandfather probably had affairs, but he kept them to himself.

The Labour Party is going to bring in a law that says you can go everywhere you want in the country. I have checked this with two people, and they both said it was true. People will be able to walk into your garden and pick your flowers. It is absurd. My garden is a blaze of flowers. I don't want anyone in there.



moment you walk in the door: "You may sit there. You may fill out this form." Unlike most units, SKB gives you a long questionnaire asking how you feel about yourself. However, it's strangely unflattering, as they never offer choices

that are entirely positive: "I often feel as though 1) I am certain to fail in life; 2) I have very little chance for success; 3) I doubt that I can succeed; 4) I have as good a chance for success as anyone else." Where is "I'm the king!"?

No expense is spared by this pharmaceutical colossus. The pay is high, the duration of the studies is generally short, and the equipment used is state-of-the-art. The catch is that your mental health is not very important to these researchers. For example, last December, one experienced guinea pig went into an SKB study of the combined effects of the antidepressant Paxil and the antihistamine Seldane. He emerged with \$7,000 in his pocket and his mind on planet Zork. In the following weeks, the man's family and friends went through some terrible grief, and even now, after several months, he is still far from normal and unable to discuss what happened.

If you're the kind of beady-eyed guinea pig who likes to get the big bucks for taking the stupid risks, SKB is a great place for you.

[Rating System]

## PET PEEVES

*From instructions for evaluating pets and their owners, used by the employees of East Towne Pet Clinic and Gammon Pet Clinic, in Madison, Wisconsin, before the owner sold the clinics last year. The document was obtained by Bill Lueders, a reporter for Isthmus, a Madison weekly.*

### CLIENT ATTITUDE

*General things to consider in assessing a client*

- Client's attitude toward expendability of the pet
- Amount of discretionary income allotted for pet care
- Occupation: Leader or follower?
- Education: Will every piece of advice be needlessly challenged?

### Rating

1—Best possible type of client. Wants almost everything. Realizes quality care may cost.

9—Poorest possible client. May want everything but willing to spend nothing.

### CLIENT/PET PROFILE

#### Clients

- A — Asshole
- B — Bitches a lot
- C — Crabby
- D — Dizzy and dumb
- I — Jerk
- K — Kids awful
- M — Mentally retarded
- O — Obnoxious
- W — Women hater but nice to men
- X — Deadbeat

#### Pets

- A — Asshole
- B — Barker
- BWO — Better without owner
- D — Drooler
- F — Fear biter
- P — Pre-sedate at admission
- U — Urinates in clinic
- W — Wild

[Consideration]

## A SHORT HISTORY OF CURES

*From a previously unpublished speech by Robertson Davies, in The Merry Heart, a collection of Davies's essays and lectures to be published this month by Viking. The speech was originally given to medical students at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Davies, whose novels include Fifth Business and What's Bred in the Bone, died in 1995.*

When I was a boy, if I went to a doctor he examined me gravely, asked questions that were searching without being positively embarrassing, and, when we had both had enough of that, retired to a dirty little kitchen behind his consulting room, where he mixed up a few things he had lying around and emerged with a bottle from which he instructed me to drink three times a day. It usually contained something that tasted of rusty nails and boiled rhubarb, and I received it reverently, because I regarded the doctor as a magician, and I knew that his nasty mixture had magical properties.

Over the years I have seen the arrival of many medical certainties, heralded by trumpeting and hosannas that have soon died upon the ear. Not all of these panaceas were strictly medical, but medical men seemed to believe in





This photograph of a desert locust in flight was taken by Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennou, and appears in *Microcosmos: The Invisible World of Insects*, published by Stewart, Tabori, & Chang. Nuridsany and Pérennou also directed the feature-length film *Microcosmos*. They live in Paris.

them. The first I recall, from when I was quite young, was autosuggestion, advanced by one Emile Coué, and it was delightfully simple. All that was required was that the sufferer should fall asleep every night murmuring to himself a magical formula—what Oriental religions call a mantra—which was, *Every day in every way I am getting better and better*. And people did get better and better—for a while. But the forces of evil were too much for it, and lots of people went down into their graves gasping out the wonderful mantra, and in a few years Monsieur Coué passed into oblivion, joining the advocates of colonic lavage and the people who thought that everything could be cured by eating bran.

His disappearance was not noticed, and as he vanished another medical wonder appeared upon the scene. It was called focal infection, and it was thought to be the cause of many of our mortal ills. As I understood it, focal infection came principally from diseased teeth, and in my part of the world we were greatly impressed—indeed we were awed and humbled—by a famous dental surgeon who devoted all of his Sundays (for nothing, just for the sheer philanthropy of the thing) to pulling the teeth of the inmates of our largest mental hospital. Many of them, it was asserted, recovered their wits as a result of his ministrations and rushed out of the asylum, praising God and His agent upon this earth, the great dentist. But some-

thing happened—I don't know what it was—and focal infection faded from view.

There were many more similar, and similarly ephemeral, changes in medical enthusiasm. In the city in which I lived as a young man, a doctor achieved fame that lasted for almost a year treating cancer—apparently with success—with something or other he wrung out of rabbits.

Such doctors have never paid much heed to what I now ask you to pay attention to—to that which may be called the guiding symbol of your vocation. I mean the caduceus, which has for centuries—indeed for at least five thousand years—been the special mark of your profession. It is the staff of Mercury with twining snakes. Legend has it that one day the god Hermes (the Greek Thoth) came upon two warring serpents, who writhed and fought upon the ground at his feet. To restore peace the god thrust his staff between them, and they curled around it, forever in contention but held in a mutuality of power by the reconciling staff.

What are the serpents? Are they damned ghosts? No: They are vividly alive and relevant. They are Knowledge, or Science, and Wisdom, and in your profession the caduceus is a perpetual reminder that you are required to hold them in balance and to keep one from devouring the other.

I remember with pleasure a conversation I had a while ago with a young man who was studying medicine, who told me that one of the



finest of his teachers said to his class, "When you find yourself at the bedside, don't immediately *do* something; just *stand* there!" In other words, hold Science in check and wait to see what Wisdom does.

This is all perhaps best expressed in the practices of one of the most astonishing diagnosticians of this century, the late Dr. George Groddeck. When a difficult case was brought to him, which was often when other doctors had had a crack at the case and given up, he put the patient in bed in his clinic and for two or three days did not see him; the patient was calmed by warm baths, cleaned out by gentle but searching enemas, fed small quantities of bland foods. Then, at last, Dr. Groddeck appeared, sat by the bedside, and told the nurse to strip the covers from the patient. He placed his ear on the patient's abdomen, and there he listened for sometimes three hours, without speaking a word. He listened to joints. He sniffed the patient's breath and sometimes, dismayingly to the sensitive, he sniffed their privy parts. Groddeck was not a pretty man, and it must have been rather like a nosy inspection by a hedgehog, or perhaps by one of those gnomes one meets in fairy tales. But at last, when all the sniffing and listening and prodding with the fingers and thumbs was over, he began to talk to the patient and to ask questions. After a while, the great doctor began to make suggestions. He had found a diagnosis, frequently an unexpected and astonishing one. I hope I do not provoke nausea in any of my hearers by using the word "psychosomatic," but sometimes—certainly not always—his diagnosis was along psychosomatic lines. Like all really great doctors, he acquired a reputation as a magician, but he laughed heartily when that was said to him. He might well have said, as the great Ambroise Paré said three centuries before him, "I dressed his wounds, and God healed him."

You see, of course, what Groddeck was doing. He was allowing the patient to speak, in bodily sounds and smells, before the patient was invited to open his mouth. And what had happened was that what was deepest in the patient—not merely his disease—had been invited to speak to what was deepest in the doctor.

There you are, ladies and gentlemen. I have told you what to do: now go and do it. In your diagnoses, give full attention to the Left-Hand Snake.

I make no charge for this invaluable advice. I myself am above taking fees. But I know that you must live, and when you have brought about enough cures, not you but your grateful patients will insist that your fees be doubled.

[Newspaper Reports]

## FIGHTING WORDS

*From accounts in various newspapers of an April 9 exchange on the floor of the House of Representatives between Tom DeLay (R., Tex.) and David Obey (D., Wisc.). Portions of the accounts appeared in the April 10 issue of The Hotline, a political newsletter published in Alexandria, Virginia.*

A shoving match erupted on the House floor yesterday between Republican whip Tom DeLay and the ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, David Obey, less than a month after House members held a retreat in hopes of restoring civility to the chamber.

The fracas started after Representative George Miller, a California Democrat, referred to an article from two years ago alleging that lobbyists had written legislation in DeLay's office.

Obey, who had been watching the debate on his office television, raced to the floor with a copy of the article to help Miller.

"That's chicken shit," DeLay, the third-ranking Republican in the House, shouted away from the microphone but in hearing range of reporters. He jabbed a finger into Obey's chest, then shoved him. Several bystanders, including Miller, leaped forward to separate the pair.

—Boston Globe

Obey lightly brushed DeLay as he waved the article under his nose—and DeLay angrily shoved him backward with both hands, a breach of House etiquette.

As he pushed Obey, DeLay could be clearly heard calling the Wisconsin Democrat a "gutless chicken s—t" for bringing the matter up. A DeLay staff aide, Scott Hatch, quickly stepped between the two lawmakers and defused the incident.

—Philadelphia Inquirer

During a heated debate on a procedural motion about campaign-finance reform, Obey closely pointed at DeLay's chest. DeLay, the No. 3 GOP leader, said "chicken—" and shoved Obey with both hands.

—USA Today

When Obey walked across the House chamber to confront him with the article, DeLay shoved Obey and directed a profanity at him.

—Los Angeles Times

The confrontation climaxed a heated floor debate on campaign-finance reform. Rep. Charles Schumer, New York Democrat, had just begun speaking when Mr. Obey raced over to Mr. DeLay, poked a finger at him, and talked to the Texas Republican in the aisle be-



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and the sound of the floor microphones. Mr. DeLay shoved him back with both hands and could be heard in the gallery saying "gutless chicken-shit."  
—*Washington Times*

Obey, the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, said he approached DeLay to discuss the article when the Republican "poked me in the chest and called me a lying chicken-shit."  
—*Roll Call*

At one point, Mr. DeLay pushed Mr. Obey and, in a voice loud enough to be heard through-

out the chamber, dismissed the senior Democrat as "chickens—."  
—*Wall Street Journal*

Mr. Obey walked over to Mr. DeLay and held a photocopy of the article out to him. Mr. DeLay poked at the article with his finger, and then shoved Mr. Obey with both hands. He also shouted at Mr. Obey that his tactics amounted to chicken droppings.  
—*New York Times*

[Assessment]

## THE ROVING RECORDER

From "The Best Job in the World," a speech by Gabriel García Márquez that appeared in the Spring issue of *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*. García Márquez, who once worked as a journalist in Colombia, originally gave the speech last fall at a conference of the Inter-American Press Association in Los Angeles.

I believe that technological splendors have diminished the importance of news content and have led journalists to forget a fundamental truth: that the best story is not always the first one but rather the one that is told better. Journalists have lost sight of, or given up on, their most critical and demanding objective—the detailed and truthful reconstruction of an event. In other words: the real story, such as it occurred in real life, so that the reader can learn it as if he or she had been present when it took place.

Before the Teletype and the telex were invented, a man with the vocation of a martyr would monitor the radio, capturing off the air the news of the world from what seemed extraterrestrial whistles. An erudite writer would then compose news stories, adding background and other details as if reconstructing the skeleton of a dinosaur, beginning with one vertebra. Only editorializing was forbidden, because that was the sacred right of the newspaper's publisher, whose editorials, everyone assumed, were written by him, even if they weren't, and which always were composed in prose renowned for its entanglements. Historical publishers used to hire a personal Linotypist to unravel the prose.

Today's journalist is more concerned with a "scoop" than with any kind of story. And, at the risk of sounding anecdotal, I would argue that one of the demons in this drama is the tape recorder.

Before the tape recorder was invented, the job was done well with only three elements of work: the notebook, foolproof ethics, and a

[Poem]

## TRANSLATOR AT THE RECEPTION

"The Translator at the Reception for Latin American Writers," by Julio Manzan. The poem will be included in *El Coro: A Chorus of Latino and Latina Poetry*, to be published this fall by the University of Massachusetts Press.

Air-conditioned introductions,  
then breezy Spanish conversation  
fan his curiosity to know  
what country I come from.  
"Puerto Rico and the Bronx."

Spectacled downward eyes  
translate disappointment  
like a poison mushroom  
puffed in his thoughts as if,  
after investing a sizable  
intellectual budget, transporting  
a huge cast and camera crew  
to film on location  
Mayan pyramid grandeur,  
indigenes whose ancient gods  
and comet-tail plumage  
inspire a glorious epic  
of revolution across a continent,  
he received a hand script  
for a social documentary  
rife with dreary streets  
and pathetic human interest,  
meager in the profits of high culture.

Understandably he turns,  
catches up with the hostess,  
praising the uncommon quality  
of her offering of cheese.





*The Ironers, 36th St. III, by New York City artist Bill Jacklin. The painting was on display in April at the Marlborough Gallery in New York City.*

pair of ears for listening to what the sources were saying. Somebody needs to teach young reporters that the recorder is not a substitute for memory but simply an evolved version of the notebook, which served so well when the profession first started.

The tape recorder is the guilty party in the vicious magnification of the interview. Radio and television, because of their own natures, turned the interview into the journalist's ultimate goal, but now even print media seem to share the erroneous idea that the voice of truth is not the journalist's voice but the voice of the interviewee.

Young journalists pride themselves on saying that they can read upside down the secret documents on a minister's desk, that they can tape casual conversations without the knowledge of the conversant, and that they can publish information they learned in a confidential conversation. But the outrageous use of quotation, in false or real statements allows unwitting or de-

liberate mistakes, manipulations, and distortions that turn a news item into a poisonous weapon. Quotes given by informed sources, or high government officials who asked that their names not be revealed, or by observers who seem to know everything but whom nobody knows, cover up all types of journalistic violations that remain unpunished. But the guilty party holds on to his right not to reveal his source. I believe that bad journalists cherish their source as their own life—especially if it is an official source—and thus make it a myth, protecting it, nurturing it, and ultimately developing a dangerous complicity that leads them to reject the need to seek out a second source.

The tape recorder listens and repeats—like a digital parrot—but it does not think; it is loyal, but it does not have a heart; and, in the end, the literal version it captures is never as true as the notes taken by the journalist who pays attention to the real words of the interlocutor and at the same time values them with



has antitheses and qualifies them with his morality. Maybe the solution is to return to the lowly little notebook so that the journalist can edit intelligently as he listens and relegate the tape recorder to the role of witness.

[Consideration]

## TRUE STORIES

*For the introduction by Ethan Coen to Fargo, a book of the screenplay written by Coen and his brother, Joel, and published by Faber and Faber.*

**S**peaking of true stories, our grandmother told us this one. It happened in New York, many years ago.

Alone one day in her apartment, Grandma heard a knock at the door. She opened it to "a large Negress," as she would later say, who, tired and thirsty, asked if she might have a glass of water. Grandma invited her to sit down in the foyer and went to get the water.

Grandma stopped before reaching the kitchen and returned to ask the woman if she wanted ice. She surprised the woman, who was standing over a side table going through Grandma's handbag. As the Negress withdrew Grandma's wallet from the purse she looked up, and for a frozen moment the two women stared at each other. Then Grandma leapt.

She grabbed the arm that held the wallet. A struggle. The Negress reared back and swung her free hand at Grandma's face. Grandma's glasses flew off, hit the floor, and shattered, but Grandma hung on tenaciously. Grandma dug her fingernails into the Negress's wrist. The Negress howled, dropped the wallet, and fled.

Grandma told the story of the large Negress many times, and we never tired of it—the innocent ringing of the doorbell, the meeting, the startling character reversal, then the drama of the fight. Grandma always became agitated at the point in the story where the Negress hits her and her glasses fly off, the digging of the fingernails into the wrist was always presented as a great brainstorm, and the howl of the predatory Negress being put to flight was not just the story's climax but a shocking culmination of the woman's metamorphosis from meek water seeker to raging harpy.

Either by virtue of its drama or its repetition, the story came to feel mythic. One pictures the black woman as a huge Southern Baptist with a sun hat, reading glasses, and a mountainous bosom. Grandma, a small wiry Russian, flies at her like a cocker at a romping bear. The eyes of the

black woman roll with fear and rage. Her floral print dress is frozen mid-swirl; one hand, flung back, clutches the wallet, toward which Grandma, teeth bared in a snarl, leaps. "Grandma and the Negress": it is a theme that might have inspired great artists through the ages.

But in retrospect some elements of Grandma's story test credulity. Do eyeglasses really "shatter" when they hit the floor? Do people who are tired and thirsty really ascend to twelfth-floor apartments on West End Avenue seeking glasses of water? If not, would a burglar use such a story? And if so, would it work, even on Grandma? And then how exactly did the fat woman flee? Did she stampede, wheezing, bosom a-jostle, down twelve flights of stairs? Or did she summon the elevator and anxiously wait, hopping from foot to foot, humming old temperance songs?

One is forced to wonder about the other "true" stories that Grandma told us. Having grown up in Tsaritsyn (later renamed Stalin-grad and, later still, Volgograd), did she really almost drown on a flatboat on the Volga River? Well, why not? But did her cousin, who became an officer in the Red Army, really marry a beautiful woman who from her wedding night on did not rise from bed, where she passed the time eating chocolates and waxing fatter and fatter until the day when her husband—appalled, frustrated, despondent—shot himself?

Grandma said so. They are true stories; they happened like this. You might think that by virtue of their setting alone they would be incredible to two children growing up in suburban Minneapolis. But no, we accepted all of her stories, either because children are credulous or because we were credulous or because the frozen plains of Minnesota are not so different from those outside Tsaritsyn. Then again, our grandmother was not unique even in our midwestern town. Mar Ralnick, a teacher in our Hebrew school, would tell us about how when he was a youth the Cossacks would break into his family's house—in his account it sounded like a daily occurrence—searching for sacks of grain. Young Mar Ralnick would tell the Cossacks that there was no grain. One day he did so with too little respect, and one of the Cossacks took umbrage. "And then," said Mar Ralnick, now an elderly man with Hubblesque eyeglasses, vein-roped hands, and wagging jowls, "the Cossack let me feel his whip." The tension between the familiar (Mar Ralnick) and the exotic (whip-wielding Cossack) is striking only now, years later, in retrospect. At the time it did not seem strange that these Cossacks searching for sacks of grain should tramp so close to one's own experience. But even if it is strange, that is no evidence that the thing didn't happen—just as the relative ba-





By Emily Hallowell. Her work is currently on display at the Washington Center for Photography in Washington, D.C. She lives in San Francisco.

nality of Grandma's adventure with the Negress is no guarantee of its truth.

It is a fact, speaking of Russia, true stories, and personal perspective, that Leon Trotsky lived briefly on Vyse Avenue in the Bronx; a headline in a local paper in October of 1917 read, *BRONX MAN LEADS RUSSIAN REVOLUTION*.

Why not believe it? The world, however wide, has folds and wrinkles that bring distant places together in strange ways. The adage "All politics is local" is really just a special case of the truism that all experience is personal. A corollary is that in some sense there is no exotica. Everything gets compared to your own experience. Paradoxically, what is closest to home can seem exotic. We can't read about the South Seas without comparing it to Minneapolis, and we can't describe Minneapolis, even to ourselves, without it seeming like the South Seas.

To return to Grandma: she emigrated from Tsaritsyn to New York as an adolescent after the revolution. About seventy-five years later she began to lose her memory. It went quickly; her speech lost its sense, and then she stopped speaking English altogether. For the last year of her life she spoke only Russian. She hadn't used

her mother tongue in almost eighty years, or had used it rarely. For some reason she encouraged us to memorize the phrase "*Yazik do Kieva dovedët*," meaning, "By your tongue you will get to Kiev," a maxim whose sense is, "If you don't know, just ask." What use she thought we might find for that phrase in Minneapolis, we don't know. But picture the world as Grandma might have, as a great ball thinly crusted with oceans, soil, and snow. People crawl across this thin crust to arrive at some improbable place, where they meet other crawling people. Some of these people are Red Russians, some of these people are White Russians, some of these people are not Russians at all. They do various improbable things with and to one another and later tell stories about the things they did, stories having greater and lesser fidelity to truth. The stories that are not credible will occasionally, however, turn out to be true, and, conversely, stories that are credible will turn out to be false. Surely young Grandma (itself a paradox) would not have believed anyone telling her that she would never in her life see Kiev but would instead see The Jolly Troll Smorgasbord & Family Restaurant in Minneapolis, Minnesota. ■



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# BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE

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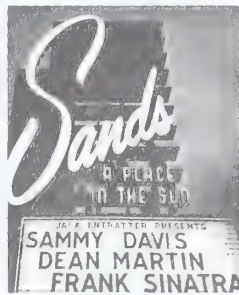
BY DAVID SAMUELS

**T**he Loizeaux family's impact on the American landscape can be measured best by what is no longer here: the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Denver, the King Cotton Hotel in Memphis, the Northwest Bank in Minneapolis, an entire city block in Dallas, the Pruitt-Igoe housing projects in St. Louis, the Wayne Minor Houses in Kansas City, Missouri, the remains of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, and the Hacienda Hotel, which vanished from the Las Vegas skyline on New Year's Eve before an audience of half a million delirious tourists and millions of television viewers across the country. The Loizeaux family has used its expertise to destroy weapons systems and missile sites throughout the former Eastern bloc states as well as burning oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico and twenty-six earthquake-damaged buildings in Mexico City. In 1972, the Loizeaux took down a thirty-two-story skyscraper, the largest building ever demolished with explosives, in São Paulo, Brazil. They have imploded more than 7,000 structures in all, or an average of one structure every two days for the forty-five years that the family company, Controlled Demoli-

tion Incorporated, or CDI, has been in business.

Demolition is a particularly American act, a concise and visually compelling expression of the belief that history is transient, that a new beginning is always in the cards, that the glories of the past are only a prelude to an even more glorious, everlasting present. Although no one knows exactly how many buildings are demolished in America in any given year, estimates are that \$2 billion to \$3 billion worth of demolition contracts are bid on annually by six to seven hundred firms. The overwhelming majority of these jobs—concrete stanchions, parking lots, five-story garages, tract houses, row houses, apartment houses, highway overpasses, and worn-out shopping malls—are accom-

plished over a period of weeks or months through nonexplosive means: bulldozers, construction cranes, wrecking balls, and jackhammers. The spectacular collapses of twenty-story smokestacks and skyscrapers featured in the pages of *Demolition Age*, the industry's monthly stroke book, are accomplished by four major contractors: the Loizeaux; Jim Redyke of Tulsa, Oklahoma; Steve Pettigrew of Franklin, Tennessee; and Eric Kelly and Anna Chong of Hayden Lake, Idaho. Of



David Samuels is a contributing editor of Harper's Magazine. His report "Presidential Shrimp" appeared in the March 1996 issue.



the four companies, Controlled Demolition Incorporated is the most experienced and, not surprisingly, the best insured. Before striking out on their own, both Redyke and Pettigrew were employed by the Loizeaux.

Spanning three generations, five decades, and tens of thousands of hand-placed explosive charges, the Loizeaux family story can be read both as the heartwarming tale of an ordinary family that does extraordinary things and as a history in reverse of the United States, written in dynamite and detonating cord. The company was founded by "Daddy Jack" Loizeaux, the seventh and youngest son of Alfred S. Loizeaux, chief engineer for the Baltimore Gas and Electric

way System, to the worn-out steelyards and factories of Pennsylvania, to the slum blocks cleared for urban renewal under Presidents Johnson and Nixon, and, more recently, to the housing projects built in their place.

Of all the many stops on the Loizeaux family's well-traveled road of destruction, it is hard to imagine a more resonant example of the particular process and the larger implications involved in demolition work than the Sands Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. The Sands opened on December 15, 1952, and closed its doors in July of last year after a weekend stand by the comedian Gallagher, who enjoyed a moment of fame in the Eighties for an act in which he smashed watermelons with a sledgehammer. In between, the casino welcomed Frank Sinatra, Joey Bishop, Sammy Davis Jr., Rotarians, and members of the Oklahoma State Bar Association, as well as hundreds of nameless men from New York, Newark, Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, and Minneapolis who checked in with empty suitcases and checked out the next morning with thousands of dollars in cash skimmed off the top for their absentee bosses, who sold out in 1967 to Howard Hughes, under pressure from the FBI and the Justice Department. The Sands witnessed the rise and fall of strong-arm men and billionaires, of LBJ and J. Edgar Hoover. It saw JFK in his underwear and the astronauts of Apollo 13 sunning themselves by the pool. More than a landmark of postwar America, the Sands was five decades of unwritten history expressed in solid, structural form.

When, early last November, I met with Doug Loizeaux at CDI's Maryland headquarters, our conversation turned again and again to the family's plans to demolish the Sands on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, until Doug made me an offer I couldn't refuse.

"The Sands should be fun," he said. "Why don't you come out to Vegas for a few weeks and help us with the job?"

**T**he Sands tower stands in the forward part of the casino lot, looming over Las Vegas Boulevard like a giant tube of lipstick, poker-chip balconies dotting its circumference and a narrow exterior staircase running like a seam up its right-hand side. In front of the tower stands the worn-out neon sun that lit up the Strip at night above the legend **A PLACE IN THE SUN**. The casino fixtures, from slot machines to gaming tables to the furnishings of the high-roller suites, were disposed of at a public auction held by the Robin brothers of San Francisco last August, and by mid-November the work of demolition is already far advanced. Wrecking cranes roam like prehistoric animals taking saw-toothed bites from the low-lying roofs of the casino buildings adjacent to the eighteen-



SANDS BOSS JACKIE FREEDMAN WITH A SHOWGIRL, CIRCA 1955

Company, whose name appears on the blueprints for the Southern Seafood building in Baltimore, which Jack's sons, Mark and Doug, and Mark's daughters, Stacey and Adrienne, obliterated two years ago to make way for Oriole Park at Camden Yards. Beginning with the tree stumps Jack Loizeaux dislodged with dynamite during the 1930s, the family moved on to brick chimneys and coal tipples, to the low bridges cleared to make way for Dwight D. Eisenhower's Interstate High-



COLUMN  
PLUS: HOLE AT MEZ. LEVEL  
Relax at grand Sands

dry tower. The original two-story stucco buildings of the hotel—the Santa Anita, Hialeah, Triple Crown, Belmont, and Arlington—are reduced to bare concrete palates where massive air-conditioning units and neat piles of switchboxes await the wreckers' trucks tomorrow. In the center of the hotel lot, a twisted heap of scrap metal erupts like a late-Sixties public sculpture from the greenish waters of the Paradise Pool.

The Loizeaux brothers, Mark and Doug, will not arrive on-site until two days before the implosion. Until then, the preparatory work proceeds in stages. Floor by floor, the local contractor, LVI, clears each of the six "shot-holes" where the explosives will be placed—the ground, mezzanine, second, fifth, ninth, and eleventh floors of the Sands tower—with a jackhammer mounted on a Bobcat, a small, highly maneuverable, low-slung vehicle with a wire cab and a snub-nosed front that suggests an oversized children's toy. The destruction of the shot-floors is loud and dramatic: carpets are ripped up, mirrors shattered, walls punched out, until the hallways and hotel rooms where the tourists once unpacked their bags, dressed for dinner, and mourned their losses at the tables downstairs are reduced to a rubble of concrete and plaster. The tower is plowed off the side of the tower by a Bobcat, and the floors are swept clean until only the structural elements remain: the bare concrete tower, the desert sun shining in through the empty windows. Concentric rows of cylindrical, three-foot-thick concrete columns ring the core of the elevator shaft like an arrangement of electrons around the nucleus of an atom.

Every building begins as a dream. Destroying a building, on the other hand, is a matter for realists rather than dreamers, a slow, almost biblical reckoning as the layers of wood veneer, naked glass, and wallpaper—glued, screwed, nailed, and stapled onto the concrete walls—are stripped away. On the uncleared floors of the tower, the halls are lined with rows of cast-iron bathtubs, and the air is heavy with the sweetly stunted smell of rotting carpet and wet plaster. In the rooms themselves, the hopeful progression of the casino's decor is reversed as layers of wallpaper are scraped away: grandmotherly plaids give way to gaudy peacock reds and blues, and, finally, the original Casbah arches against a flat, tan background.

Overseeing the destruction of the wedge-shaped hotel rooms, home to generations of junk-teering tourists, is CDI's on-site project manager, Jim Santoro, a cheerful forty-year-old. Before coming to work for CDI he ran a mental hospi-

tal in upstate New York, an activity that seems to have prepared him well for dealing with the many different types of people one meets on construction sites worldwide. Jim's cheerfulness can also be explained by the flesh-colored hearing aid he wears over one ear, which allows him to

## **The Sands saw J. Edgar Hoover, JFK, Joey Bishop, and the Apollo 13 crew. It is American history in structural form**

survey the work undisturbed by the pounding drills. When he is finished inside he retires to the parking lot, where he sits in the front seat of his rental car and makes dozens of calls on his flip-top phone before breaking for lunch. He spends his afternoons driving around Las Vegas, submitting forms and plans to fourteen separate departments in seven regulatory agencies in order to obtain the five specific permits required before the Sands can come down.<sup>1</sup>

As each floor of the hotel tower is cleared, CDI's drilling crew moves into position. The crew is made up of six local day workers, black and Latino, in dusty blue coveralls. Working two to a drill, the workers bore holes 1.75 inches in diameter into the 131 shot-columns where the charges will be placed, as Thom Doud, Doug's handsome, black-haired nephew, shouts instructions, urging the workers forward like a high school quarterback in the closing minutes of a tight game. The paralyzingly loud drills they use, with their smooth-worn stocks and long, tapered noses, are picture-book examples of twentieth-century industrial design. The combination of the noise, the safety goggles pulled down over eyes, the earplugs stuck fast in ears, and the stark, monochromatic shade of the drilling floors creates an otherworldly landscape



A COPRA GIRL IN THE PARADISE POOL

<sup>1</sup> The Street Occupancy Permit obtained from the Nevada Department of Transportation allows CDI to close down Las Vegas Boulevard on the night of the implosion. The Special Events Permit, signed by Clark County officials, licenses CDI to conduct operations that may create a public disturbance. The Blasting Permit from the Clark County Fire Department enables CDI to utilize explosives. The Air Quality Permit ensures that the blast will not adversely affect the air of Las Vegas. The Demolition Permit from the Clark County Building Department permits CDI to demolish the Sands.

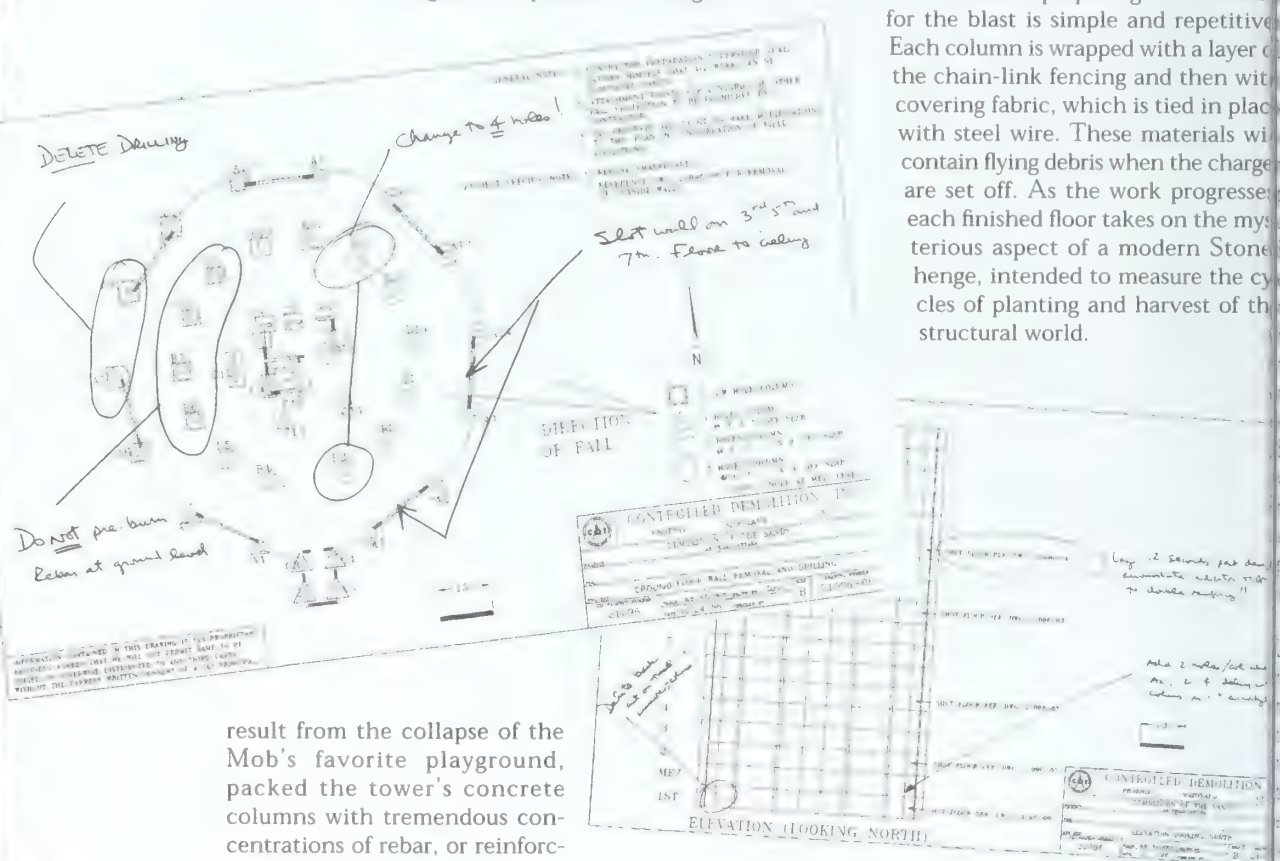


from which recognizable sensory cues have been erased. The work takes a tremendous physical toll, and by the end of the day the workers are tired and sore, their torsos covered with bruises and welts.

One of the first lessons of demolition work is that the blueprints and specifications drawn up by architects and engineers can never be trusted. In the case of the Sands, however, the problem arises not from the usual causes of larceny, greed, and deceit but from the overscrupulous nature of the original contractor, who, no doubt frightened of the extralegal consequences that might

ence on-site is something of a challenge, as the workmen gossip and speculate behind her back and mistranslate her instructions into Spanish. "How do you say, 'Bring the fabric up to the third floor?'" she asks a worker named Carlos, who smiles broadly, flexes his chest, and offers a different phrase instead. "Come up to my bedroom and screw me all night," Adrienne orders. After eight long hours of hauling the heavy rolls up three or four flights of stairs, however, the workers' discomfort with her has been transformed into a companionable respect.

The task of preparing the columns for the blast is simple and repetitive. Each column is wrapped with a layer of the chain-link fencing and then with covering fabric, which is tied in place with steel wire. These materials will contain flying debris when the charges are set off. As the work progresses, each finished floor takes on the mysterious aspect of a modern Stonehenge, intended to measure the cycles of planting and harvest of the structural world.



result from the collapse of the Mob's favorite playground, packed the tower's concrete columns with tremendous concentrations of rebar, or reinforcing steel. The drilling proceeds much slower than expected as carbide drill bits that would normally retain their edge for weeks are worn within days to the smoothness of bone. The exterior staircase, fixed to the side of the tower with the same overzealous concentrations of rebar, presents a similar obstacle to a smooth demolition, and calls are made back to headquarters in Maryland to consult with CDI's engineers and to warn Mark and Doug that the Sands may not go down as easily as planned.

Once the drilling is done, the six-man covering crew—led by Mark's nineteen-year-old daughter, Adrienne—takes over, lugging precut rolls, six feet tall by eight feet wide, of chain-link fencing and thick black covering fabric up to the shot-floors to wrap the columns. Adrienne's pres-

**W**hen not on the road or preparing for a job, the Loizeaux family live and works together on a forty-five-acre compound in the pre-suburban horse country of Phoenix, Maryland, forested by well-spaced trees and graced by a picture-perfect babbling brook that lends the spread the overly peaceful feel of a Zen monastery. A 1940 brick manor house in the center of the property functions as CDI's corporate headquarters and is home on workdays to some seventeen employees, including secretaries, bookkeepers, an engineer, a drilling expert, two project managers, Mark and Doug Loizeaux, and Mark's daughter Stacey. The brothers and their familie



ive on the property in rambling houses a hundred yards apart, which they have furnished over the years with stained glass, oak paneling, and other architectural features salvaged from the buildings they have demolished.

The first time I entered the manor house, I was greeted by a kitchen sink full of unwashed coffee mugs and then by an array of clocks above the desks of the secretaries displaying the current time in Minsk, London, Seoul, and the United States. The assignment board listed ongoing projects in red and blue Magic Marker: the Sands tower in Las Vegas; a seventeen-story office building in Norfolk, Virginia; the Lexington Terrace projects in Baltimore; the Clifton smokestack in Arizona; an oil rig in the North Sea; three cooling towers at a power station in Madras, India; SS-25 missile pads in Belarus. The preparation for

each implosion—from getting the necessary permits to knocking out interior walls and drilling the holes where the explosives will be placed—can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months. The charge for a medium-size implosion, such as the Sands, ranges from \$100,000 to \$200,000. This is a surprisingly modest sum, but volume is high: at any one time, CDI is likely to have two or more teams preparing implosions across the country or around the world; the company's gross revenues last year amounted to roughly \$12.5 million.

The CDI promotional literature presents the Loizeaux brothers as a pair of well-built men in their mid-forties with short-cropped hair and rimmed mustaches beneath matching white plastic hard hats, and so, meeting them for the first time, I was struck immediately by the fact that they look nothing alike. Doug, the younger brother, is taller and clean-shaven and moves with the easy confidence of a high school athlete turned successful suburban businessman, a guy you would expect to find driving his sports car too fast or playing squash at the club when he ought to be at work. Mark, whose reddish hair is supplemented by a close-cut beard, is more introspective. In the Hollywood action-hero version of the Loizeaux family story, Mark might foil a terrorist plot to blow up the White House on the eve of an important summit meeting with the Japanese, or he might be the terrorist. If you ignored the souvenir bricks and the lengths of steel cable as thick as your arm on the bookcase shelves, Mark's office could easily have passed for a *Better Homes and Gardens* illustration of how to give your workspace that gracious, lived-in feel while still retaining the formality necessary to the conduct of business. Doug's office, upstairs, has the wood-paneled

walls, pitched ceiling, and outdoor terrace one might expect of a time-share rental at an upscale ski resort.

The morning I arrived, Doug was watching footage from CDI's recent Lexington Terrace implosion in Baltimore, in which five grimly functional red-brick housing blocks had been demolished to make way for low-rise, low-income housing. In the last year or so, CDI has imploded twenty-eight housing projects across the country, jobs that provided an unmistakably sincere statement of President Clinton's desire to "end welfare as we know it." As such, these events are

## **Fearing the Mob, the Sands' builder packed the tower with too much reinforcing steel; it will not fall easily**

regularly attended by government officials such as former Housing Secretary Henry Cisneros, who showed slides of the implosions to promote the work of his department. But what interests Doug this morning are not the political uses to which his work is put, or even the technical aspects of the job, but the aesthetics of the event as seen through the lens: the long slow sweep of the camera as the five brick buildings melt away from the skyline to reveal the city of Baltimore, clean and renewed against the horizon. As the buildings go down, one after another, a cloud of concrete dust billows toward the camera, leaching the color from the frame and flecking the lens with bits of paint and concrete. "That pan," Doug said, "was wonderful."

When he was younger, Doug wanted to make movies, an ambition reflected in the hundreds of CDI archive photographs of a younger, bearded, hard-hatted Doug with shoulder-length hair and a Super-8 camera in his hand, and responsible in part for the company's comprehensive library of still and motion-picture footage of nearly 7,000 structures in various stages of dynamic collapse. The most compelling of these appear in "The Art of Demolition," a four-minute montage accompanied by a synthesizer soundtrack that sounds like a cross between the theme from *Chariots of Fire* and the bass-heavy thump of a porno flick. "Look at those beautiful Palladian windows," Doug said, as the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Denver slid gracefully to the ground. Then we were treated to a particularly stunning sequence of a brick building in the final stages of collapse, filmed through the canyons of steel and glass that make up the modern, up-to-date city of Charlotte, North Carolina. "Mmmm," he said.

If the slow disintegration of buildings under



wave after wave of explosive charges has its own undeniably resonant aesthetic, whether seen as surrealist landscape or as real-time action sequence, an answer to the endless loop of collisions and explosions we consume like a drug, the CDI library serves a practical purpose as well. Films of past implosions allow the brothers to study the motion of falling buildings frame-by-frame and thereby learn from their experience: the Sands tower, for example, bears a structural resemblance to the core of the Landmark, the flying-saucer-like hotel and casino built by Howard Hughes that dominated the Vegas skyline like a prop left over

**"I could drive a truck on the Verrazano Narrows Bridge," says Mark, "drop that bridge, and I would get away"**

from some ancient B movie until CDI cut the structure in two with explosives three years ago. The brothers' obsession with their craft has also resulted in a growing symbiotic relationship with Hollywood—they frequently provide footage of collapses and custom-made explosions to augment the force of the make-believe. Doug's windswept footage of the implosion of the Traymore Hotel appears at the beginning of Louis Malle's *Atlantic City*; Joel Silver, the action-movie producer, employed CDI for special-effects work on *Demolition Man* and *Lethal Weapon III*; Tim Burton used footage of the Landmark implosion in his *Mars Attacks*.

Doug takes pleasure in the sense of directorial control that the work provides, a spectacular instant staged not merely for the camera but for the thousands who gather to mark the final moments of the buildings they have worked in, lived in, fought in, loved in, or simply walked past every day on their way to some other building. The emotion held in these moments is a mixture of sadness and hope and awe, a confirmation that the past is behind us, blown to pieces, while the future is waiting, wide open and new. "You hear people screaming, and it's such a venting of frustrations for so many people," Doug told me. "I used to think people came to see implosions the way you go to car races to see a crash, but it's not that. It's controlling something that they see as uncontrollable. And looking at something so large and seeing it reduced to nothing in a matter of seconds gives them a feeling of power. It's that scream—YESSSS!"

For television and print reporters, the implosion of a local landmark with high-powered explosives is a gift from God, and the Loizeaux are quietly proud of their ability to handle the

press, to answer the standard-issue questions—family stories, biggest building ever imploded, pounds of dynamite used per year—with consummate skill. The reassuring image the family projects is an important part of the work they do. Blowing up tall buildings with high-powered explosives in heavily populated areas is an undertaking founded on trust: the family's chief competition arises not so much from other implosion experts but from more traditional, less instinctively terrifying methods of demolition. And the fact that CDI is a family company, with a grandfather, sons, and granddaughters all working together, tends to soften the fear that explosives demolition inspires.

That the word "family" serves a pragmatic as well as a descriptive function is hardly lost on Doug and Mark. Both brothers choose their words carefully, because their work demands precision and because the careful use of language is a necessary tool to help soften perceptions of what, to laymen at least, is essentially a destructive and risky occupation. The word "implosion," for example, was popularized by the family in the 1950s in an effort to put another comforting layer of distance between the work they do and the popular idea of an explosion as a violent, uncontrolled, destructive act, an unwelcome reminder of a generation's wartime experiences in Europe and Korea. The family's attention to language has its advantages: CDI, unlike its competitors, is able to purchase upward of \$300 million in liability insurance—enough to cover even the most unlikely disasters, from bricks in the head to heart attacks to the leveling of entire city blocks.

Apart from the obvious uses of the word "family" to their work, however, it is apparent that like all families, the Loizeaux brothers see the family and its traditions from their own particular points of view. Doug keeps his family and the family business as far apart as possible: when asked what he does for a living at dinner parties, his usual answer is "contractor." Mark Loizeaux, on the other hand, was born to blow things up. Doug remembers his older brother as a boy floating paper boats down the stream in front of their house, then blowing them out of the water with charges fashioned from firecrackers. At ten Mark helped his father take down their first buildings with explosives, an apartment complex in Washington's Foggy Bottom neighborhood, where the State Department stands today. At twelve he designed and set off his first array of charges from start to finish, demolishing a 170-foot-tall bridge pier. At eighteen, after his father was hit by a car and injured, Mark left college and took over



ne company. His enthusiastic and single-minded absorption in his work is obvious; he combines an aesthete's appreciation of the way the buildings move once the charges go off with an engineer's ability to bring down a thirty-story tower weighing thousands of tons in a space the relative size of a shoebox without breaking so much as a pane of glass in neighboring skyscrapers. He actively encourages his two older daughters' involvement in the business, and takes his fourteen-year-old twins, Jason and Devon, on the road, with an eye toward educating them about the business of demolition.

"I think any craftsman is proud of what he makes or creates," Mark said, looking back on the family's three generations of demolition experience. "I can go into almost any major city in this country, or in the world, and drive by with one of my daughters or my son and say, 'Well, see that building there? We took down the structure that replaced the structure that my father took down, that this is now replaced, and that you'll be taking down someday.'" Mark enjoys demolition work's power to impress, the power to elicit feelings of fear and awe from thousands of spectators. He likes watching the pictures on TV. He likes making a plan in his head and seeing it expressed in the controlled collapse of thousands of tons of steel and concrete.

Mark's conversational manner is calm, logical, and direct, and so it took hours of conversation, over several days, to realize that the exterior Mark presents is very similar to that of a convinced Marxist or neurobiologist or horse-layer who believes that he has found the secret X, the hidden lever that moves the world. He is a man whose entire being is energized by one big idea. Driving down the street with Jason, past the horse farms and the Christmas-tree ranch and the herd of bison owned by a wealthy local dentist, they approach a radio tower, and Mark listens with pride as his son describes the array of RC-900 charges he would use to bring it down. Walking past Rockefeller Center to visit CDI's insurers, Mark passes the time by planning the precise sequence of charges he would need to alter the Manhattan skyline for good. "It's true, I admit it: it's human nature," he told me, his eyes lighting up with the reflected glory of the tens of thousands of explosions, real and imagined, inside his head. "The way a plastic surgeon looks at a woman with bags under her eyes, you know, and wonders." My second night in Phoenix I met Mark



Loizeaux and his family for dinner at a local restaurant, the kind of place you find in once-rural areas, with names like "The Huntsman's Tavern" or "Hound and Horn," red-coated gentry riding to the hounds across the walls and local divorcees gathering in a knot at the bar on Thursday nights. Mark's wife, Sherry, has the blonde, blue-eyed look of a Virginia high school prom queen grown into a comfortable middle age without having lost the native good humor and core beliefs of the gentler tradition in which she was raised. When she asked me sincerely if I believed

in true love, there seemed to be no other choice than to say yes.

After a medium-rare steak and a couple of glasses of scotch, Mark's conversation strayed to what was obviously his own true love: explosives demolition. "I'll tell you the thing I've found really scary," he said. "More and more I look at structures and I think, 'If I were a terrorist, how would I take it down?' Oklahoma City really flipped some switches there," he added, a slight

twitch having developed at the corners of his mouth. "I find myself realizing just how simple, how easy. It's like those silly things you walk through to get into airports. I walk right by that stuff. Do you realize that everything we have is just saturated with explosives? PETN, that powder they found traces of on TWA flight 800 because somebody hid explosives there when they were testing dogs months ago? Well, our bags are just steeped in that stuff. And I've never had a dog bark, wag its tail—'it's in there, boss.' Nothing." Having helped blow up buildings since he was eight, and having built up a profitable sideline in antiterrorist consulting over the past sixteen years, for private business and for the Army's Special Forces, Mark has solid, professional reasons for seeing the world as he does. But every good cop, as they say, is also part criminal.

"We could drop every bridge in the United States in a couple of days," Mark was saying, just thinking out loud, and then his eyes lit up as the idea took on its own special resonance inside his head. "I could drive a truck on the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and have a dirt bike on the back, drop that bridge, and I would get away. They would never stop me."

"How often does a thought like that occur to you?" I wondered aloud, as Mark took another sip from his scotch.

"Every time I cross a bridge."

STACEY LOIZEAUX, AGE THREE, WITH DETONATOR BOX

5 HOLES/COLUMN  
3, 5, 7, 9, 11  
PLUS 1 HOLE AT MEZ LEVEL

Return at ground level



One clue to the force of Mark's quasi-religious obsession with the family's work became evident the next morning, as the brothers planned the demolition of an oil rig in the North Sea and laughed over the misfortunes of one of their competitors, who had just dropped the chimney of a high-rise apartment building across a commuter track, disrupting local rail service. As the brothers conferred, I had the chance to spend a few hours with their father, "Daddy Jack" Loizeaux. He looked remarkably spry for a man in his mid-eighties, showing up at the office in a gray track suit, having just won two hard-fought sets of tennis against a man twenty years his junior. He was happy to tell me

erdeen Proving Ground, where the army needed someone to take down five tall brick chimneys. Young Jack solved the problem with typical *Popular Mechanics* ingenuity: he notched the bases of the chimneys as if they were trees and used explosive charges to lay them gently on their sides.

As Daddy Jack told his story, I found myself lulled into the same pleasant state of mind one experiences on a long drive when the only voice available over the radio is that of the announcer on the Christian station telling the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. The cause of this association is not hard to find. A deeply religious man, Jack Loizeaux raised Mark and Doug according to the precepts of the Plymouth Brethren,

a somber, Quakerish sect, and explosives demolition is for him a kind of parable in which the moral tenets of his faith find their concrete, earthly expression. Before every blast, he said, he would pray with his sons and "thank the good Lord for the gravity."

Daddy Jack's ongoing ministry of destruction has taken him, he told me, to the Naval Academy at Annapolis, to local high schools, and, on one occasion in the 1980s, to the television studios of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, whose literal-minded brand of evangelism was not in sympathy with his own more sober beliefs. "He seemed to have the impression that God had spoken to me from the heavens, telling me to take down buildings," Daddy Jack related, cupping his hand to his ear. "I told him it didn't happen that way at all."

He does, however, see the structural integrity of a building as a physical metaphor for the soul, which can be undermined by bad character and sinful actions. "I think about how long it took to plan it, and to build it, and the expense," he said, "of the moments before a building comes down. And then in a few seconds I can destroy it all. And when I speak to young people, I tell them how important it is when they build a character, a reputation, because whether it's sex or drugs or their language, it's like taking the column out of a structure. It gets weaker. And all of a sudden—bang! She's gone."

Jack Loizeaux is shrewd about his sons' vulnerabilities. Mark's sin is the sin of pride and hard dealings. Doug's sin is the same as his father's—he is soft. "Mark could be in Hollywood, or he could be an attorney, one of the two," he said. "He



JACK (CENTER) AND MARK LOIZEAUX (RIGHT) BLOW A BRIDGE, 1960

about his life's work, which began on a sunny afternoon at the University of Georgia forestry school when he was introduced, in classic Mephistophelian fashion, to a Mr. Johnson of the Du Pont Corporation, who arrived on campus one afternoon to survey the Oconee River and returned several weeks later with a truckload of dynamite. With a twist of the detonator, a shower of dirt exploded from the ground, the sky turned black, and the banks of the Oconee were straightened in seconds, an event that left the elder Loizeaux with a vivid and lasting impression of what he still refers to today as "the awesome power of explosives." Working as a forester in Baltimore, he soon turned to explosives as a method of removing stumps as Dutch elm blight killed off the stately trees by the thousands, until Mr. Johnson called again, directing his protégé to the Ab-



an put up a real tough front. But I've hugged him before we took down a building, and I can feel him making inside. But nobody knows it. He'll walk round like he's God. And Doug, I remember the first building he shot. He went into the alley and vomited. He can get real upset."

As the sun sank behind the Maryland hills, Daddy Jack remembered the Mitsubishi turboprop plane he used to fly from job to job, and the time the family was shot at with .22 rifles when they demolished the Pruitt-Igoe housing projects in St. Louis. He recalled standing on an airport tarmac in the days before faxes and Federal Express and handing the flight attendant a \$20 bill to fly the plans of a building from Baltimore to Los Angeles so that another engineer could examine them. "If I had my way," he said, "I'd love to shoot buildings before daybreak when nobody is around—no cameras, no nothing." The jobs he likes best, he said, are those on the water—just the crew and nature and God's gravity. "And then the charges go off—boom, boom, boom," he said, recalling the first pier he ever shot, "and we eliminate that pier with no flyt all. Now isn't that wonderful?"

As one looks out over the desert mountains and the freeways from the top floor of the Sands tower, with the fluorescent wallpaper peeling from the walls, the threadbare green carpet littered with broken glass, the secular forces behind the impending demise of the Sands are easy to spot. The Mirage Hotel crosses the street, into whose outstretched black arms the Sands tower would fit with many rooms to spare, was built by developer Steve Wynn in the late 1980s, the beginning of the exuberant wave of casino building that has made Las Vegas one of the fastest-growing cities in the world, a low-airfare-weekend-getaway paradise firmly grounded in current American themes of "family" values, shopping, and addictive-compulsive behavior. After the vulgar neon highs of the Sixties and the shag-carpet lows of the Seventies, Las Vegas is finally a city at ease with itself, a place where the red carpets are shampooed bright and early every morning as mothers push infants in strollers down marble walkways, pausing to wave hello through the glass partition at Siegfried & Roy's white tigers, then past the craps tables where Daddy is dropping next month's mortgage payment, before they stop in for a breather at the DKNY boutique. From the top of the Sands I count twelve rigami-like construction cranes dipping their jointed beaks down to the city below, toward the waiting bounty of waitressing jobs and construc-

tion sites, video-poker machines in every 7-Eleven, and giant billboards looming above the downtown casinos, promising "Free brunch if you cash your paycheck here." Set to rise on the site where the Sands now stands is Sheldon Adelson's \$2 billion Venetian, the latest in the wave of theme-park casinos that began with the MGM Grand and the Luxor and now includes New York-New York, with its one-third-scale replicas of the Empire State Building and Statue of Liberty crisscrossed by a giant Coney Island rollercoaster. Soon to follow are the Bellagio, a high rollers' version of the famous Italian villa, and Paris, a neon version

## **A \$2 billion theme-park casino will replace the Sands, testifying to the American capacity for self-delusion**

of the City of Lights, complete with its own scale version of the Eiffel Tower.

The historic passage from the faded glories of the Sands to Sheldon Adelson's Venetian is a powerful testimony to the American belief in starting over; in lucky numbers, charms, and stars; in our expansive capacity for self-delusion; as well as to the more general national transition from the smoke-filled backrooms where Las Vegas was born to the hazy methadone smog of movies and television. The pleasures of Las Vegas, old or new, however, hold little attraction for CDI. Life on the road for the crew is a matter of passing through a distant place at reasonable prices with the least possible resistance or distraction. The crew usually stays together in hotels close to the site with a bar downstairs and cable TV in the rooms. Sometimes the accommodations are worse, as they were in Seoul, where Jim and Thom shared an abandoned house and the South Korean contract workers slept six to a room next door. By these standards, the rooms at the Best Western on Paradise Road are large and clean and even luxurious.

Because the work is so exhausting, and the schedule so tight, the crew rarely ventures out of the Best Western. They meet in the downstairs restaurant for drinks and dinner and light conversation revolving mainly around the job, with sporadic excursions into the quality of the food, which is poor, and the hairstyles of the women seated at the bar. Entertainment at the Best Western involves video-poker machines in the lobby and nightly performances by a bottle-blond singer, perhaps twenty years old, with the demure red lips and hairsprayed curls of an up-and-coming Christian pop star. She has a bright and bouncy vocal style, as if someone had implanted



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OF FALL

a microchip from an early Eighties synthesizer keyboard inside her brain, and her repertoire is composed of airbrushed standards, drained of whatever shards of human emotion might have been accidentally embedded in their original versions: "The Tide Is High" by Blondie, "Suspicious Minds" by Elvis Presley, "Hey Jude" by the Beatles, "Bette Davis Eyes" by Kim Carnes, "Heart of Gold" by Neil Young, several songs by Fleet-

**The truck's 880 pounds of dynamite are enough to smash the windows in all the casinos surrounding the Sands**

wood Mac. Adrienne leaves early. The others continue to drink at the bar, where Jim, who is friendly to a fault, attracts more than his fair share of local wackos, who ask for a light and then go on for hours, laying it all out on the table—kids, divorce, retirement—until by nine or nine-thirty even Jim has had enough and retires to his room.

After a week or so of going to bed late and waking up at five-thirty in the morning, I feel the same desperate, free-floating detachment I detected in the chain-smokers at the bar, an emotion that manifests itself, a week into my stay, in a chance encounter in the parking lot with one face of the new Las Vegas—a former diver named Greg, who parks his beat-up VW microbus in the space immediately below my room on a Saturday night and plays loud, thrashing music, which, after twenty minutes or so, I decide would sound just as good at a lower volume. Greg is friendly, has long brown hair to his shoulders, and wears a black T-shirt advertising the Washington, D.C., punk band Minor Threat. He grew up in Galveston, Texas, where he learned to dive off oil rigs in the Gulf before getting into a jam with his foreman as well as with some "very heavy big-time people." The back of his van smells like an unwashed rug, and there is an army-green sleeping bag rolled up in the corner, along with the usual thrown-together mess of pots and pans and other equipment assembled by people who wake up one morning to take their show on the road and wind up somewhere like Las Vegas.

Greg offers me a soggy joint and explains that he has come to Las Vegas in the hopes of finding a job in a casino and making a fresh start. What he likes best about Las Vegas, however, is the desert, with the wide-open spaces and the cactus and the wildflowers that bloom after a storm, and as he talks about the desert, and then about the people he knew in Galveston—the speed dealers, a girlfriend named Linda, Linda's eight-year-old

kid, Danny, a guy named Derrick, or Rick, and a number of other people who seem to have also existed in some shared nexus of amphetamines and oil rigs—I sense that his logic is skewed in a familiar, American way: he believes that what went wrong in Galveston was only bad luck and that by moving to Las Vegas, hundreds of miles from the nearest offshore oil rig, his luck will necessarily change for the better.

The demolition site when I arrive the next morning, is a hive of activity, with drills pounding and dust rising and massive dump trucks beeping and grinding as they back out over the rubble-strewn lot carting away their cargoes

of history. Mark arrives on-site in the afternoon, hugs Adrienne, then retires to the front seat of his rented Buick Skylark, where he sits with his chin on the steering wheel for an hour or more in silence. Then he walks under a crane, up the stairs and through the shot-floors, gazing over at the support columns, feeling the concrete like a sculptor, running his fingers over a block of uncut marble. All of these actions are part of a ritual by which Mark hopes to cement what he describes as his "empathetic relation" with the tower: in forty-eight hours, the Sands will be gone.

**T**he explosives arrive on-site just after 5:00 A.M. on Sunday. The driver, David Hoffman, meets us at the gate, a mild-looking man in his early thirties who sticks his head out the window of his 4 x 4 truck and shouts a friendly hello into the glare of the headlights. His stonewashed blue jeans feature the words SANDERS CONSTRUCTION on a red and yellow emblem, and there is an exploding stick of dynamite emblazoned on his pocket. Behind his truck is a trailer that looks like a reinforced U-Haul. Inside the trailer are boxes containing detonating cord and blasting caps. The boxes resting on the open bed of the truck are filled with 880 pounds of dynamite, enough to blast a five-foot-deep crater into Las Vegas Boulevard and break all the windows of the surrounding casinos.

Unloading the explosives is an easy, unceremonious job. Because dynamite is more or less inert during transit, and detonators are volatile, the explosives must be stored separately. The inside of the trailer is lined with wood rather than metal, in order to prevent stray sparks from being struck while on the road. After a quick once-over the crew unloads the dynamite from the back of Hoffman's truck, uncouples the truck from the trailer, and locks the detonators and the dynamite safely inside. Then everyone repairs to the Denny's, the next storefront over from the Sands.



5 HOLES / COLUMN  
OFF SLIP  
PLUS 1 HOLE AT MEZ LEVEL

52

Rebar at ground level

an early-morning breakfast of bacon and eggs. After that, Hoffman drives off to spend the morning with his in-laws in Las Vegas, and the rest of the crew returns to the site, where we are joined by Doug and Stacey Loizeaux, who have flown in to lend a hand after imploding a seventeen-story office building in Norfolk, Virginia. The final stages of the job have begun.

The first order of business this morning—the test shot—will determine exactly how much dynamite will be needed to blow the heavily reinforced columns of the Sands apart; it is a step-by-step rehearsal for the larger and more complicated shot that is meant to reduce the tower to rubble on Tuesday morning. The dynamite itself looks much the same way it does in the Saturday-morning cartoons: familiar-looking foot-long sticks wrapped in waxed paper, a cheery red color-lending them an unmistakably festive appeal. Mark breaks a stick in half with his hands to reveal a creamy, black-flecked substance the consistency of marzipan but surprisingly smooth and soft to the touch.<sup>2</sup>

Loading the column for the shot is fun to watch, a combination of the family's do-it-yourself inventiveness and the dangerous glamour of high-powered explosives. Mark pushes a silver detonator into the dynamite, then works the wired charge into the hole in the concrete with a sawed-off wooden mop handle until it hits the back of the column with a satisfying split. He follows the explosive with a brown paper sack filled with play sand, which will keep the charge from blowing harmlessly out of the hole, then fires the charges together with lengths of bright yellow detonating cord containing the highly explosive crystalline powder PETN. Two ground-floor columns are loaded and wired—one with a stick and a half of dynamite, the other with a single stick. The yellow detonating cord is then attached with electric wire to the blasting machine, a black transformer box like the ones kids use to launch model rockets after school.

The floor is cleared, Mark hands me the blasting machine, and on the count of five I flick the cond and final silver switch, an act that is instantly rewarded by a rush of pure adrenaline to my brain and a boom that resonates in the center of my chest. "Check out the columns," Mark says, and as we tear open the covering fabric, which has been only partially ripped open by the explosion, the imaginative pleasure I feel at the blast, stamped in cartoony Captain America colors, offering me the power to destroy my ene-

*Nitroglycerine, the explosive in dynamite, is also a powerful vasodilator. Among the occupational hazards involved in handling dynamite are the throbbing aches that begin almost immediately as the nitro penetrates the skin and races through the bloodstream into the brain.*

mies with a pulverizing glance from my death-ray eyes, is increased even further by the sight of the solid, three-foot-thick structural column reduced to a shattered mess of broken concrete and tangled steel. In the first column, where the lesser of the charges was placed, the concrete facing of the column has been blown away; inside, however, the inch-thick supporting rods and the helices of rebar remain unbroken.

Working from the top of the tower down, Mark, Doug, and Stacey now slice open the covering fabric and pack the holes beneath—446 in all—with a stick and a half of dynamite each. The packed columns are then linked together with lengths of detonating cord and sequenced with delays—bright orange plastic tubes containing a dusting of the explosive powder RDX—allowing the brothers to time the detonations,



ATLANTIC CITY'S TRAYMORE HOTEL COMES DOWN, 1973

floor by floor, and thus control the shifting weight of the tower as it comes down. As each shot-floor is wired, the Loizeaux family moves down to the floor below, leaving behind a spider-like maze of yellow cord hanging down between the black, funeral-shrouded columns.

The worry now is that the steel reinforcing in the columns might be so solid that the tower will defy the force of the explosives and remain standing on the steel alone. Under Mark's direction, the crew pounds the tower's exterior walls with a jackhammer attached to the Bobcat, raising clouds of dust, knocking out concrete, and exposing rebar until the once-solid tower is transformed into a maze of black-wrapped columns, nests of wire, and ragged patches of clear blue sky. The crew then cuts through the rebar with acetylene torches, the thin blue flames licking through the steel with a surprising lack of resistance as showers of golden sparks cascade across the concrete floor.

The work continues all day Sunday and on



HEADS/TALES  
 2 HOLES/COLUMN  
 DIRECTION  
 OF FALL  
 B3  
 B4

into Monday evening, with portable klieg lights illuminating the site like a movie set as the Sands tower is laced with explosives, transformed into a device for the controlled release of the massive amounts of kinetic energy that have been trapped inside its columns, floors, and walls for more than forty years. At eight in the evening, their hair gray from the dust, their faces exhausted, the workers break for dinner in the parking lot. They are too exhausted to speak. Seated on the long black rolls of covering fabric, they listen to music, rhythm and blues competing with Spanish rap. Cigarette coals stand out in the dark and cast a glow on the faces so that the scene resembles some temporary border encampment of campesinos resting for an hour or two until the coast has cleared and it is safe to go on. The air is heavy with concrete dust, and a pheromone mix of adrenaline and regret seems to emanate from the tower itself.

Mark Loizeaux puts a hand on my shoulder. His hard hat is dirty; there are purple bruises beneath his eyes. "Over the last few days we've been changing the way it thinks about gravity," he explains, gesturing up to the darkened tower. "We've been changing the way it thinks about itself. It doesn't have the sheer walls. It doesn't have the redundancy of the structural supports. It stood there for years, ready to take on seismic events, winds, elevators going up and down, people walking back and forth and partying on New Year's Eve . . ."

From where we are sitting, the exterior columns of the shot-floors, wrapped in black, look like armbands worn to honor the dead. Inside, more than 287 pounds of dynamite are ready, wired, and waiting to explode. "What's going to happen is, I'm going to use its very strength against it," Mark says, the familiar gleam returning to his eyes, his hands chopping away at the air in sequence with the planned detonation of the forty columns at the tower's base. "What I'm going to do is take the weight and hang it out there, and the tower is going to rotate right here, on the back of the elevator shaft, and pick the back columns right off the ground. They weren't meant to do that. And then it's going to go."

**D**ipping down through the neon-lit haze of Las Vegas Boulevard late Monday night, the helicopters hover in over the tower, shining shaky circles of light off the poker-chip balconies and down to the empty billboard below. All along Las Vegas Boulevard the Metro police are out in force, more than a

hundred policemen in cars and on foot, circling the site, stopping traffic, massaging batons, marking barricades, and barking instructions as football field away from the tower's base the late night carnival crowd swells and surges forward over 3,000 strong, insomniacs and thrill-seeker curious tourists, gamblers and late-shift waitresses, rowdy young men in Los Angeles Kings jersey college students on break, and tourists like Jimmy Dickson of Los Angeles, who got married in the Silver Bells wedding chapel thirty or forty years ago and spent his honeymoon night at the Sands. In the crowd tonight are hangers-on who remember the hotel in its prime: Sinatra strutting across the stage, his eyes alight with their icy psychotic glitter; the Copa Girls kicking up the heels in white feather boas, wearing bowls of fruit on their heads, in metallic jumpsuits in honor of the astronauts, showing their stuff for the high rollers and the tourist couples, the husbands and wives of thirty and forty years ago.

The old-timers here are hard to miss. They hold themselves like movie-star gangsters from the Thirties and Forties, like Jimmy Cagney and George Raft, ready for action, their arms up near their chests and chins thrust forward. The way they walk is particular, to standing way up on the balls of their feet and striding through the crowd with an exaggerated hip-swinging side-to-side roll like sailors on shore leave spoiling for a fight. There is Danny Roscoe, who looks like a retired rancher; John Getler, a bebop hop, who learned never to take a suitcase from the hands of



A CDI WORKER INSERTS DYNAMITE INTO A WRAPPED COLUMN

guest; and Sonny Benkert, who brought Sinatra his hamburgers medium-rare. In their memory the faces from the hotel's history live on: The young JFK stands outside the Sands with Peter Lawford on a sunny afternoon in 1960, a pair of gold-rimmed aviator sunglasses in hand, having just spent his first stolen hours with Judith Campbell and intimately involved his future presidency with the Mob. Lyndon Johnson looks sleek and handsome in a three-piece linen suit, sharing a laugh with rumples casino boss Jack Freedman and several men in dark suits. They remember the new corporate style of Howard Hughes, when the casino started whittling away at the size of a whiskey shot—first to a single ounce, then to seven-eighths of an ounce—and the hotel's dreary final months, when the Sands lured walk-in slots players with \$1 margaritas served in complimentary plastic mugs.

What the crowd will see tonight is, as always, the end of a dream. The men who built the



sands—Frank Costello, Vincente “Jimmy Blue Eyes” Alo, Meyer Lansky, Longy Zwillman, Joseph “Doc” Stacher, and the rest—were an all-star team of organized crime whose grander, unspoken ambitions—money, fame, a place in the sun—are present still in the tremendous concentrations of steel reinforcing the tower’s structural columns. Freedman, the casino’s original frontman, was a Jewish gambler from Texas who wore bolo ties and ashmere coats and ran the high-stakes Domain Privée in Houston. His application for a Nevada gaming license was turned down by the commissioners of Clark County, who reversed themselves several weeks later, whereupon the state agreed to forgo the standing request for net-worth

statements on the grounds that the IRS might subpoena such documents for tax prosecutions against the licensees. Jack Entratter, who ran the Copa Room, had been sent out to the desert from his post as manager of the Copacabana in New York to book talent and to make sure that the suitcases full of cash arrived on time. As opening day approached, Sands publicist Al Freeman grew more and more frantic, finally outdoing himself with a planted item in Frank Farell’s New York Day by Day column in the *World-Telegram & Sun* announcing that the casino had “rigged a minor atomic burst for the opening in place of the usual ribbon cutting.”

Despite the rain and mist that blanketed Las Vegas on December 15, 1952, the opening night of the Sands, the beginning of the dream that will end here tonight in less than an hour, was all its sponsors could have hoped, with entertainment by Danny Thomas and a menu featuring asparagus and carrots from Holland, mushrooms and artichokes from France, curry and chutney from India, peas and onions from Belgium, candied chestnuts from Italy, and hearts of palm from Brazil. “Who’s that at the gambling table next to you?” wrote Broadway columnist Earl Wilson, who, like the other junketeering East Coast reporters, had his train fare, food, and wagers paid for by the house. “Maybe a Texas oil man. Maybe a character from the underworld. It could even be Ursula Thiess, the German actress who’s a friend of Robert Taylor and who does a nude swimming scene in the new picture, ‘Monsoon.’” Wisconsin sportswriter Roundy Coughlin was also impressed. “They got more people sitting at the gambling tables out here at four bells in the morning than work at the Gisholt and Oscar Mayer,” he cabled home, after counting thirty-one Cadillacs in the hotel parking lot and partaking of the \$1.85 steak and potatoes dinner. Opening-night action at the tables was fierce, fed by escalating

reports of losses by the casino so massive that they made front-page news across the country. “Canny press release shouted banner heads of a \$250,000 loss in the first eight hours,” *Daily Variety* later reported, “but by the close of third shift . . . [the house] was off to the big-money races.” The greatest scam America had ever seen was on, the dream of a place where the sun was always shining, everything was permitted, and no one batted an eye at the guards pushing garbage cans

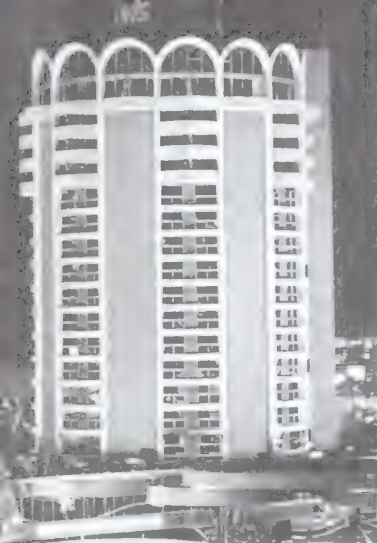
**“Over the last few days,” Mark says,  
“we’ve changed the way the tower  
thinks about gravity . . . about itself”**

filled with silver dollars along Fremont Street toward the downtown banks.

The further evolution of this timeless dream of transcendence is being unveiled tonight in a tinted-glass luxury suite at the Mirage Hotel before a mixed crowd of business-suited flacks and weary-eyed reporters. The Venetian, set to rise on the site where the Sands still stands, will be, according to one executive, “the largest hotel in the world.” The new hotel will feature replicas of the Bridge of Sighs and the Lido beach, as well as gondolas and canals, a clock tower, “thirty of the world’s finest restaurants,” ten swimming pools, two casinos, 6,000 suites, and a 750,000-square-foot shopping mall, rendered in the accompanying drawings as a combination of Philip Johnson warehouse modern and the mock-classical public buildings bestowed upon Rome by Mussolini. “We’re Las Vegas-izing the whole concept of Venice,” explains Sheldon Adelson, whose unnaturally smooth, tight skin suggests that at any moment he might reach up beneath his chin, tear off his human face, and begin barking orders at his subordinates. If the face of the Sands was the face of old-fashioned men of honor and respect, men with suitcases and guns, Adelson’s is the face of the new America, of bronzed, withered youth and corporate-style gaucherie.

What Las Vegas is really about, however, is not gondolas or clock towers or luxury suites but time in its most precious, crystalline form: the time it takes to move walk-ins across the casino floor, or the time the average player will spend at the tables after gobbling down the \$6.99 buffet. Time is what brings Sheldon Adelson and the Loizeaux together. In the eight and a half seconds it will take for the Sands to disappear from the face of the earth, Sheldon Adelson will gain eight or nine months that would otherwise be lost to the slow-motion work of wrecking balls and dump trucks, an intolerable pause in the sucker’s ballet.





DIRECTION OF FALL

**A**s the all-clear siren sounds above Las Vegas Boulevard, the cameras click and flash from the upper decks of the Harrah's parking garage to the right of the Sands, recording the final moments of the eighteen-story tower about to vanish forever in a cloud of dust. Adrienne has rescued a family of pigeons from high in the tower, their eardrums torn and bloodied by the noise of the drilling; she has swathed them in covering fabric and laid them to rest in the backseat of her father's Buick. Now, with the shot only minutes away, she and her crew put a precautionary black tarp over the windows of the Denny's next door. As the news helicopters circle overhead and shine their spotlights down on the lot below, Doug and Mark exchange a brotherly hug.

Crouched in the dirt a hundred yards away from the tower's base, behind a massive air-conditioning unit, Adrienne is understandably nervous. In a few minutes she will press the button on the blasting machine, sending out an initial pulse of electricity lasting 25/1000th of a second. Too soon for the delay to be detected, the first flashes of light will be seen at the base of the tower, initiating a sequence of explosions that, if Mark's calculations are correct, will rotate the structure off its axis at an angle of twenty-three degrees, just long enough to rip the exterior staircase free from the tower. The upper floors of the tower will then fold, as if connected to the floors below with a hinge, and the tower will duck neatly under the falling staircase and collapse in the open lot in front of us. "Resistance is 9.5," the walkie-talkie crackles as Mark checks the electric charge in the wires snaking out across the field to the tower's base. "That checks, Doug." The walkie-talkie crackles again. "We're at two minutes now and holding steady."

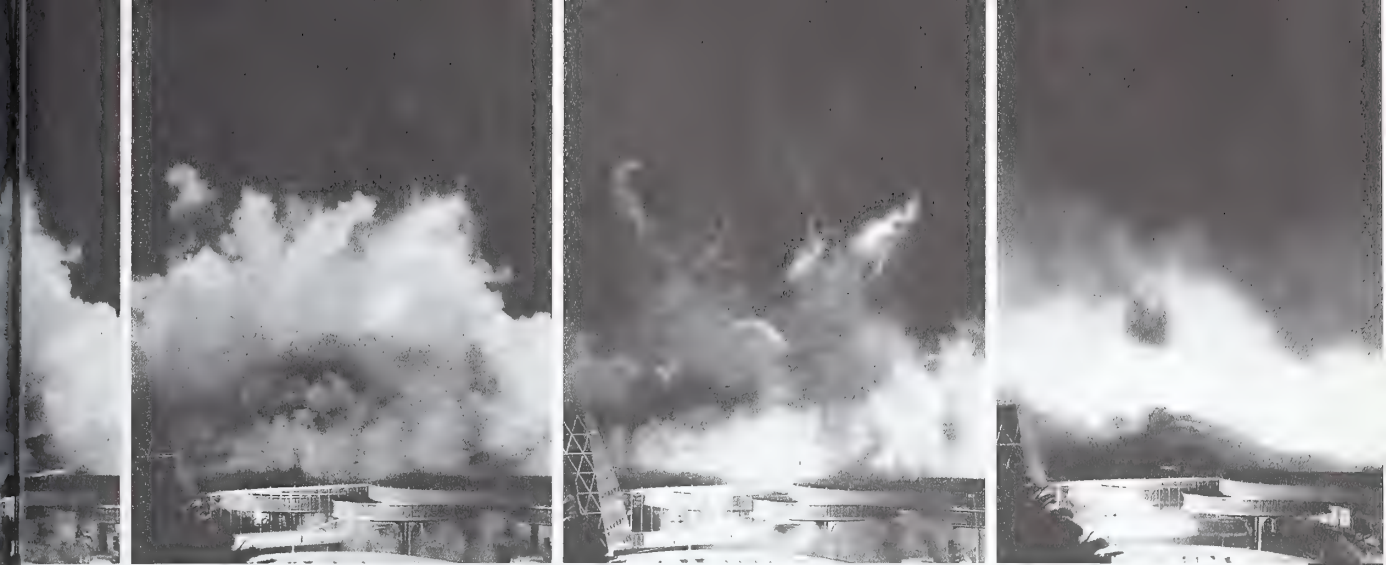
A silence has now fallen over the site, punctuated only by the occasional flashbulb, an expectant pause like the moment in an Olympic stadium before a long jumper leaves his feet and

hurtles into the air. In this moment, you can feel the crowd's awareness of the impending destruction of the tower in front of them expanding into a larger consciousness of their own mortality: what if the building sends showers of concrete and steel up into the air and down onto the thousands of spectators in the street below? "Let's have a good, safe job," Mark says into his walkie-talkie. "You know," he reflects, his voice calm as he looks down at his daughter's hand on the silver switch of the blasting machine, thinking back on the thousands of explosive flashes and the thousands of skyscrapers, bridges, factories, hotels, prisons, apartment buildings, power stations, drilling platforms, missile sites, and many other structures that he has seen give up the forms and purposes imposed on their materials by man and crumple back to the ground, "this is the first one of these I've done in a very long time where I haven't been 150 percent sure that the structure was actually going to come down."

Adrienne's thumb trembles on the switch as the countdown begins—"ten . . . nine . . . eight . . . seven"—the numbers following one another too loud and too fast in the continuing silence. "I think I'm going to throw up," she says. Mark is lost in thought, scanning the high arched windows on the tower's top floor for the initial tremor that will tell him whether the beams radiating out from the center of the roof like the spokes of a wheel have given way, whether the cantilever he has created by blowing out the two columns at the tower's base has failed as planned, and whether the tower will, in fact, come down. "One." Adrienne flicks the silver switch, and 20 milliseconds later the detonators go off: the explosive flashes light up the shot-floors with a quick succession of hard, thin bangs that echo like rifle reports among the nearby casinos.

A few thin wisps of smoke curl out from the floors where the flashes went off. Nothing more happens. The tower stands against the neon-blue





ty as the frozen lattice of time spreads out over the casinos and the crowd like a sheet of ice. As the detonator smoke fades, you can hear the stunned collective intake of breath, a hiss of surprise and disappointment rising up from the crowd. The lights of the city come filtering back in, and the same thought occurs to everyone here: nothing ever goes as planned. And there is not a single person here tonight who can honestly

say that he didn't know the lesson all along. While the seconds fall one after another like water dripping from a faucet, the spectators groan, as if at the same moment they had all let go of the dream that brought them together here at two

in the morning, the dream of witnessing something out of the ordinary. They release their breath with a wordless "AAWWW."

Turning to Mark, I see his eyes flicker as his attention shifts to the staircase and another, louder, series of explosions splits the silence like a train rushing down a track. Floor by floor the sleeping charges awaken, sending dark gray spumes of debris sideways out of the cylindrical shell of the tower. The atmospheric pressure swells inside our eardrums. As the dynamite bursts through the black-shrouded columns, the concrete floors fold in on one another like playing cards, and the sum of the horizontal components of the downward pull jerks the staircase away from the tower.

Free from the exterior staircase, the tower buckles and melts away from the sky, undoing thirty years of static endurance in its slide toward the ground, and the rush of concrete and the crowd's screaming merge in a moment of transcendent violence as the tower bursts open. It is an awesome, hallucinatory sight. The solid crust of expectations built up over years and months, hours and minutes—bad checks, bad kids, bust-

ed transmissions, and thousands of other individual disappointments—shatters, too, and the cries of the crowd lift out into the haze above Las Vegas Boulevard. The spectators surge forward, holding nothing back, throwing themselves at the tower as it ducks under the falling exterior staircase with elephantine grace. Released from the stable form imposed on it by architects and engineers, 22,302 tons of steel and concrete

## **The spectators' awareness of the impending demolition expands into the knowledge of their own mortality**

go rushing headlong to the ground, in the precise sequence Mark imagined when he looked up at the tower only moments ago.

The impact of the event hangs suspended for an exhausted moment, broken only by the wailing of car alarms up and down the Strip. A cheer goes up and a dirty gray dust billows out from the place where the tower has settled, gaining in height and velocity as it rolls toward us. Gathering up the flashlight and the blasting machine in its worn leather case, we head for the parking lot, where Doug and Stacey stand before the cluster of lights, cameras, and fuzzy boom mikes, already answering questions from the television reporters about the force of the blast and the number of sticks of dynamite used and why the tower seemed to rotate and fall backward instead of straight down. Behind us the cloud approaches at surprising speed, as if, to shield the crowd from this forbidden glimpse of the destructive capacity slumbering away in all things, an angel had descended from heaven, squatted down on the thirty-foot mountain of rubble, and begun beating its wings.

*Return at ground level*



**T**he Strip is alive with the aimless jangling excitement that you feel in a crowd outside a stadium after the big game, the lights too bright and the shouts too loud. In the alleyway on the other side of the wall, a white-haired man in a yellow plastic construction helmet, his brown tweed jacket festooned with security passes, stands with his eyes squeezed shut and an enormous pair of foam-rubber headphones clamped over his ears. He is grinning, delighted, stamping on the pavement faster and faster, as if the music inside his head had finally found an answer in the world outside.

"Do it again!" someone shouts. "I want you guys to blow up my house." The spell is broken. A passing film-student type dressed in black rushes out of the crowd, a shock of dyed red hair flopping over one eye and his other eye doing speed-freak pinwheels in its socket. "What movie is this for? What's the name of the movie?" He can't get the idea out of his head: the collapse of an eighteen-story building only makes sense as a scene from movieland, where remarkable things happen all the time. "Hey, when is the movie coming out?" The workmen look modestly around and say nothing, transformed by the magic of the blast from working stiffs into rock stars. Their proximity to the explosion, the concrete dust in their hair and on their clothes, is sexy. A translucent blonde in a white synthetic fur places a kittenish hand on the arm of David Williams, one of the drillers, and begs for a brick. He is not exactly sure how to respond. "We're working now," he finally says. "I'll get you a brick after we're done."

As Adrienne's crew removes the covering from the Denny's window, another vision appears: At 2:00 A.M. the restaurant is packed with families, cab drivers, and casino workers on break, and as the waitresses move from table to table, only a few of the diners look up at the window, glancing incuriously out at the workmen and the hole in the sky before returning to the GrandSlam breakfasts in front of them. Near the window, a large black man in a wide-brimmed hat and a full-length fur coat is sitting with three women, his left arm laid out over the red vinyl Denny's banquette as he counts out his money on top of the check: a hard night's work deserves its reward. As the workers roll up the cover in the alley, the crowd drifts off, some home to bed and some across the street to the Mirage in hopes of trading in their vision of the vanishing tower for a run of luck at the tables. On the site below, a graceful curve of masonry from the top of the tower has survived the fall nearly intact and sits atop a rounded hill of neatly fractured concrete as if placed there by design. The staircase is laid out over the rubble at a near-perfect forty-five-degree angle: the newspapers will note tomorrow that even the dust remained on-site.

"Come have a drink," offers Doug, a compan-

ionable arm around my shoulder. After months of auctions and wrecking balls, and after a single vivid instant of destruction, one last part of the Sands still stands: the Aqueduct, a horseshoe-shaped building decorated in mid-Sixties California modern, where Sheldon Adelson has his offices and where Sinatra used to stay in a luxurious suite with a swimming pool and curved-glass door. Tonight the third floor of the Aqueduct is home to Chuck Wilton, a white-haired seismologist who tested fallout shelters for the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the 1950s and has worked with Daddy Jack and his sons for years measuring the impact of their blasts on the ground. He pours scotch into Styrofoam cups and hands them around, then pops a tape into the VCR.

"Perfect. Beautiful," Mark says as he watches the flashes of light and then, much faster than seemed the first time, the answering roar of the explosives as the tower ducks under the staircase and the picture in Mark's head achieves its congruence with the picture onscreen. "Let's see that again," says Doug. The brothers were so busy watching the high arched windows for the first tremor of motion that neither of them really saw the tower come down. He stops the tape and rewinds. "Watch the front of the hotel." And as the tower falls, you can see hundreds of firefly camera flashes lighting up the facade of the Treasure Island casino across the street from the Sands in spontaneous tribute to the brothers and their work.

As the tension of the previous days and hours drains away, the brothers sip their scotch and the conversation wanders. The potbellied explosives handler from Vermont, with a heavy beard and quiet good manners, will be invited back to work with the family again. The pickup worker from a previous job in the Southwest who wanted to be part of the crew too badly and never shut up, will not. His head slumped back against the varnished veneer of the television cabinet, Doug talks about the great game of golf he has planned for tomorrow. Mark talks about the plan to blow up the Hacienda on New Year's Eve. Then it's on to the Clifton stack in Arizona, the power station in Madras, the missile pads in Belarus, and other used-up branches of the evolutionary process whose deeper ends remain hidden from our eyes but whose agents the Loizeaux surely are. Three weeks from now the rubble that was the Sands will be gone, and the illusion of a fresh start will vanish, too, as Sheldon Adelson's dream of a Venice-in-the-desert assumes its inevitable earthly form. Tonight, however, walking through the parking lot, the lights of the Mirage shining through the empty place in the sky where the Sands once stood, it seems wrong to end on a sour note. The dust has lifted, a fresh breeze blowing in from the desert mountains, and, for the moment at least, anything is possible.



# OLD SOLDIERS

In Spain, the International Brigades  
join ranks one last time

By Tony Hendra

**T**he images of young men that were everywhere in Madrid early last November—erected in respectful displays, handed out with somber programs—bore that inimitable look ordinary young men had in the 1930s: the stark, black-and-white boniness against backgrounds of flat sunlight. Young, hopeful, often happy figures, never on tanks or armored vehicles or with any kind of advanced weaponry—one sees that clearly now—always on foot, clutching ancient rifles, in the dirt outside a dusty pueblo or against a shell-pocked wall, soccer-team style, one row standing, one row kneeling, as if the game were already won, victory theirs; they and what they fought for, seen in simple black-and-white.

The hundreds of old men that some of those young men lived to be were scattered throughout the huge lobby of the Hotel Convención in midtown Madrid, and as I moved among them I felt an immediate and startling kinship, though I'd never met any of them. Most spoke languages I don't know, and many subscribed to political beliefs I long ago ceased to share. Yet they were dear to me. I applauded their faint air of victory. I was deeply, incomprehensibly, happy for them.

Throughout the wet, mournful afternoon the reason for this almost familial feeling eluded me. Then, talking to the British contingent—their gnarled, working-class faces like bas-relief pilgrims on a late-Gothic cathedral—I understood: these men were the comrades of my dead father. There wasn't one among these 370 old soldiers

with whom he wouldn't have felt utter solidarity. He would have known exactly why they did what they did, on a level so profound it could never be adequately expressed—these men and what they fought for, in simple black-and-white.

They found out soon enough that there was nothing simple about the Spanish Civil War—not in their retreat, not in their defeat, not in their homecoming. For the rest of their lives, the mad, Byronic, utterly decent decision they made to die, if necessary, to stop fascism would be held against them. They were hounded into prisons and concentration camps, blacklisted, ostracized, driven to poverty, suicide, and oblivion—often in the name of the very principles they'd tried to defend. The only ones for whom things turned out to be simple are still lying beneath the tawny dust of Spain.

My father didn't fight in the Spanish Civil War, but it was the defining war of his life. He referred to it all the time, and with a passion he never evinced for the Battle of Britain and the grim, crepuscular triumph to which it eventually led. A fierce and lifelong pacifist, he put aside his convictions when World War II broke out. He signed up for the RAF with little emotion; that war was so vast and complex, he said, the motivations of even the good guys so compromised, that he never had much feeling for it. "We needed a fascist to beat the fascists," he once told me. "Churchill was our Hitler." Of the danger and privation of being constantly under bombardment, he said with a shrug, "It was like going to work in a factory."

*Tony Hendra's last article for Harper's Magazine, "Man and Bull," appeared in the November 1996 issue.*



But three years earlier his pacifism had prevented him from fighting for the Republican cause in Spain. That was a clear moral quandary that haunted him all his life. When, in the early Sixties, I became infatuated with the country, he regarded my enthusiasm as a betrayal. Spain was then still firmly in the fist of Francisco Franco, El Caudillo, and my father was appalled that I could travel there so blithely while he, because of "principles" that perhaps masked his shame or anger at himself, could never go.

A few miles southeast of Madrid, several hundred people, eighteen buses, and two ambulances are gathered along one overgrown bank of the Jarama River, by the remains of

## THE 450 MEN OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BATTALION HAD NO MORE FAMILIARITY WITH SPAIN, ITS TERRAIN, OR ITS PEOPLE THAN THE AVERAGE TOURIST

the Arganda Bridge. The narrow, iron span—which wouldn't look out of place crossing some backwoods creek in rural Pennsylvania—seems too insubstantial to have been a vital link in the survival of anything. Two modern trucks couldn't pass on it at once. The adjacent cobbled road that once sustained the Madrileños' ferocious defense of their city has been obliterated by an autovía. All that remains are two stubby spurs a few yards long at each end of the span, forlorn beside the wide sweep of the superhighway, truncated, irrelevant, leading nowhere.

Milton Wolff climbs a reviewing stand overlooking the Jarama. He is eighty, six foot two, with a voice you can imagine emerging from an old-time Brooklyn cabbie at a Dodgers game. It is November 5, 1996, the second day of tributes and festivities for the surviving members of the International Brigades, the 40,000 volunteers from more than fifty countries who came to Spain in 1936 and 1937 to make the first stand against fascism. "Let me say to the men and women who fought here," he bellows, "it is not Spain that owes us a vote of gratitude. It is we who honor and express our gratitude to the Spanish people for the opportunity to resist fascism." Old hands leave walkers, wheelchairs, the arms of friends and lovers, to make trembling fists in the crisp fall air.

In the middle distance across the busy autovía, crumbly bluffs rise several hundred feet from the plain, a long rifle-shot from the bridge. On these heights fewer than sixty years ago, Franco's troops were massed, poised to cut

the only road connecting Republican Madrid to Valencia and the rest of Republican Spain. "No pasarán!" ("They shall not pass") had already become the great battle cry of the war in the defense of Madrid; Franco's Nationalist troops, spearheaded by Moorish regulars and the Nazi air force's Condor Legion, did not pass at Jarama either—in large part because of the extraordinary tenacity of the International Brigades. The 600-man British Battalion led the brunt of the initial assault, losing two-thirds of its men and almost all its officers. A week or so into the battle, the 450 men of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion—many of them students, all with only the most rudimentary training—were brought up for the first time. Within days, 127 of the very young, very green Americans lay dead beside this river.

The old men walk out along the bridge. It bears a none-too-recent coat of bilious paint. A little knot of Irish folk centers around a patriarchal *brigadista* named Michael O'Riordan make their way across a lone fiddler at their head. They sing as they go. O'Riordan's eight-year-old grandson marches solemnly in front of his grandfather. He knows the lyrics.

But this is as martial as things get. Most of the old men amble forward in twos and threes, quiet, contemplative. A few yards from the viewing stand, a tiny, eighty-five-year-old Parisian named Emmanuel Mink has stripped naked to the waist. He is babbling in French, shivering so hard in the sharp breeze that he hardly makes sense. He points at the ground and then to a deep cleft, a scar, in the loose skin of his back. "Here on this very spot"—he grins—"I was shot sixty years ago." He's smiling and nodding, as happy as a clam. He turns his forearm up to show me the faint blue remains of the tattoo he got for his pains, in Auschwitz.

The 127 American kids who died to hold this place had been in Spain for only a few weeks. They had no more familiarity with the country, its terrain, or its people than the average tourist. "Armed tourists," in fact, is what Winston Churchill called them. Inspired by the dynamic politics of the Depression, flamed by the atrocities of the pious Francoist troops (killing the wounded in their hospital beds, castrating the dead, raping and mutilating women), they had defied their country's laws, jumped on board transatlantic ships, been smuggled across the Pyrenees, given out-of-date weapons, and ordered to fight the hardened troops in Spain. All too soon they were heaps of meat in the winter rain. What made them do it?



"I was a progressive—an antifascist," says Nick Pappas, a genial old rogue from Los Angeles, who sounds uncannily like Anthony Quinn. "So I was never liked by the Communists. I had opinions of my own. I didn't follow the bible—*The Daily Worker*. 'The Daily Jerk' I called it." Pappas is something of a stand-out among the old warriors: he sports a wide-brimmed leather hat, moves of his own volition, and is exuberantly irreverent about the proceedings. The cascade of speechifying about the lofty motives of the *brigadistas*, much to Marxist, doesn't do a whole lot for Pappas. Hey, it was a period in the United States when there were three workers was out of work. The thinking of a young man like me was, 'There's no future in this world.' So a lot of people said, 'I'll go to Spain and fight against fascism, and I'll defeat them and stay there and make it my home.'" As for the youthful idealism that is being sentimentalized on all sides, Pappas says, "The only real, sincere idealism comes from the very ignorant, from the 'willing slaves.' A person of intelligence may think they feel idealism only until it's put to the test." Pappas earned the right to talk this way—in every major engagement the Internationals fought, right up to the bitter defeat at the Battle of the Ebro in the summer of 1938. But Jarama holds particularly dark memories. One of the 127 ghosts to haunt the narrow bridge was his kid brother, Philip, "twenty years old, killed in the first week." When he tells me this, the jovial old guy suddenly goes dumb with grief. His big Helene head slumps forward as if he'd been shot through the heart.

Milt Wolff didn't need to come to Spain. "I was working in the garment district, doing very well financially. But how could you say no?" He was also a pacifist who "wasn't going to kill anybody." He volunteered to be a medic, but a combination of inspiration—a black machine-gun commander named Walter Garland—and distaste—"there was an American doctor who captured the troops on 'venereal disease as a weapon of fascism'"—made him switch to a machine-gun company. He fought first at Brunete, west of Madrid, the next major battle at Jarama and a bloody defeat for the Republicans. He quickly discovered one advantage of being a machine gunner: "It made me so deaf I couldn't hear all the big political speeches [the communists] made." Like Pappas, he stuck it through every horror Franco and Republican army incompetence threw at him to become one of the fiercest and most admired fighters in the line. Poet Edwin Rolfe said of him: "He was intelligent, egalitarian, blunt and fearless." The Spanish troops called him El Lobo—The Wolf. Within a year the ex-pacifist

had become commander of the Lincoln Battalion. His friend Hemingway thought him the best it ever had. He was twenty-two years old.

**H**anging over all the reverent celebration is the inescapable historical fact that these old men fought on the losing side. This is not to say that they fought on the wrong side or that they were defeated by the winning side. If anything—cer-



tainly in the case of the British and American combatants—they were defeated as much by their own governments back home as by Franco. Britain, France, and other European democracies scrupulously observed a policy of nonintervention toward Republican Spain but blatantly ignored the intervention of the fascist powers on behalf of Franco. The practical result was that the democracies refused to sell or transport arms to the Republican government, while Germany, Italy, and Portugal flooded the Nationalists with state-of-the-art weaponry. Furthermore, as *New York Times* reporter Herbert Matthews pointed out in his book on the conflict, "business and financial interests everywhere saw their cause best served by a Franco victory. Powerful lobbies in Paris, London, and Washington operated against

LINCOLN-WASHINGTON  
BATTALION MACHINE-GUN  
OFFICERS. MILTON WOLFF  
APPEARS AT UPPER LEFT.  
STANDING NEXT TO HIM IS  
NICK PAPPAS



[the Republicans]. Credits extended to the Franco regime were as helpful as soldiers. American oil shipments [to it] were invaluable."

The Spanish Civil War was a war of many firsts. It was the first time a real stand had been taken against that peculiarly twentieth-century form of nationalism that married atavistic ethnic passions to the impersonal efficiency of technology. It was the first time many techniques of modern warfare were employed on human targets. Italy and especially Germany were quite open about using Spain and its people as a proving ground for new weapons and their fledgling air forces—notably in Guernica in 1937, the first time in history that civilians were sub-

property were crystal clear. Which in turn why everyone, Spaniard or foreigner, who believed in the power of people was doomed.

Franco was the kind of general who liked to command his troops from a safe distance. Once his enemies had laid down their arms, he was much braver. Mass executions, or *limpiezas* ("cleansing"), of prisoners and political foes were routine during the war; mass executions of *rojos* ("Reds") multiplied afterward. So brutal was his suppression of Madrid that Mussolini's foreign minister was actually shocked by it. Franco continued to wage war on his own people for four more years, imprisoning a million of them, according to Gerald Brenan's book *Spanish Labyrinth*, and executing thousands more. Only in 1939, when it became clear that the Axis was losing the war, did Franco give up, no doubt concerned that he might one day be held accountable. He never was. With the Axis crushed, the United States and NATO turned their attention to the larger cause of containing Soviet Communism, and by 1953 the little butcher was back in business with five American air bases and a vast American naval base on the Atlantic coast.

The fate of the International Brigades mirrored that of the Republic. Disbanded in 1938 in a vain attempt to "de-internationalize" the war, some *brigadistas* found their way home, and a few had successful careers (e.g., Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia). Many fought fascism

World War II but were distrusted by their commanders. Major Milton Wolff, despite his rank and long combat experience, was not allowed to complete officer candidate school. But many Internationals had a more summary fate. Fleeing Spain, they were trapped in France, where they were herded into concentration camps. During the Nazi occupation, they were used as slave labor or simply sent to the gas chambers.

The evening after the ceremony at the bridge, I'm standing at the bar of an eatery next to the Hotel Convención called El Parador de Jamón (The Ham Inn), which serves cured-pork product known to the Iberian peninsula. Two *brigadistas* speaking a Slavic language hobble in on canes for a nightcap and occupy one end of the bar. At the other end is a sixtyish, barrel-bellied beer drinker with a white mustache and a neat dark suit. The young brigadier leans over and asks him if he feels si-



FREDERICO BORRELL GARCIA, AT CENTER, WAS KILLED SHORTLY AFTER THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN. HIS DEATH WAS CAPTURED IN ROBERT CAPA'S FAMOUS PHOTO OF A FALLING SOLDIER

jected to saturation bombing from the air. And it was the first time the Western powers demonstrated that they could tolerate dictators—provided they didn't become too ambitious—in the larger cause of combating Communism.

For the men and women on the ground who became the victims of this larger cause, the basic issues were obvious. The unthinkable atrocities committed in the name of Communism must be separated from the profound appeal of its core message: people have a right to be free of oppressive power; people come before property. However corruptible in practice, the yearning for social justice can fire the blood as no other political emotion. That's why young men and women, Communist or not, flocked to the cause. That's why the Spanish Civil War was etched so deeply into the consciousness of those—like my father—who felt they couldn't go. For the first time—perhaps in history but certainly for this generation—the battle lines between the power of people and the power of



idad with the two old geezers. Barrel-belly  
nches into a virulent tirade about the week's  
ute: Why would anyone honor this foreign  
m? Why didn't they stay home and kill  
ir own people? The organizers are trai-  
s who ought to have their throats cut  
e pigs. The *brigadistas* sip their drinks,  
ivious. The bartender and the other pa-  
ns find all this pretty amusing. Not so  
patriot. He's purple with rage. He's  
ving his drink, swaying down the bar to-  
d his adversaries. The bartender gets ner-  
as. He starts shushing the guy. He doesn't  
ish. "If I had a machine gun," he yells at the  
adistas, "I'd go over the hotel right now and  
w you cocksuckers down—cut your fucking  
s off. That's the way we do it in Spain, asses,  
cut your fucking nuts off and throw you  
a ditch . . ." The two old guys finish their  
nks and start working their way to the door.  
her they're really cool or they're really hard  
nearing. They pass the boozed-up bozo with-  
a glance and disappear. He turns back to his  
nk. For one long, embarrassed moment, The  
m Inn is utterly silent.

The official Spanish line on the civil war is  
it its wounds have healed, that it has passed  
o passion-free history. The conflict is taught  
Spanish schools in the blandest fashion, as if  
ad been little more than a somewhat disor-  
ly transfer of power. The consensus seems to  
that it would be best if future generations  
ver again subscribed to what Gerald Brenan  
ntified as the conflict's prime cause: "the  
anish] belief, shared by almost every ele-  
ent in the country, in violent remedies."

One outcome of the official line was a reso-  
ion passed in 1995 by the Congress of  
puties (the lower chamber of the Spanish  
liament) that surviving members of the In-  
national Brigades be offered Spanish citizen-  
p. The Republican government had made  
s pledge to the brigades when they were dis-  
anded in 1938—a uniquely Spanish gesture  
it combined arrogance (Spanish citizenship  
preferable to any other), practicality (many  
gadistas, for example, Germans, Italians,  
stern European Jews, were exiles without a  
untry), and poetry (what more heartfelt gift  
uld the Spanish offer than roots in the very  
ne these men and women had crossed oceans  
defend?). At a farewell parade in November  
38, Communist leader Dolores Ibarruri, La  
ionaria, issued her own invitation: "When  
olive tree of peace blooms again," she cried  
to the departing brigades, "come  
back."

Because it is high above sea level and dry,  
Madrid is often bathed with a light of preter-

natural brilliance. The day after the ceremony  
at the bridge is one of those days. The ancient  
faces sparkle as they converge on the Palacio

## THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR WAS THE FIRST TIME THE WEST SHOWED A WILLINGNESS TO TOLERATE DICTATORS IN ORDER TO COMBAT COMMUNISM

del Congreso. This morning is to be the literal  
enactment of the weeklong Homenaje a Los  
Voluntarios de la Libertad ("Homage to the  
Volunteers of Freedom"), a ceremony in which  
the government will honor them and accept  
them as Spanish. This is what drew them here.  
For most it will probably be their last reunion,  
their last breath of bright Spanish air, their last  
chance to tread the ground they fought on.  
The political nit-picking and bureaucratic  
hand-wringing are irrelevant now. Finally, after  
more than half a century of rejection and re-  
crimination, *someone* is thanking them.

Actually, the organizers and their allies in  
the government have not really resolved the  
questions surrounding the offer of citizenship.  
(What, for example, will happen to those from  
countries, such as the United States, that do  
not recognize dual citizenship?) The answer is  
a classic instance of *sí-pero-no* ("yes-but-no").  
The *brigadistas* are to receive a kind of hon-  
orary citizenship—a certificate that entitles  
them to future citizenship should they choose  
to exercise the option. "A peculiar docu-  
ment," says one Homenaje organizer, a distin-  
guished Spanish gentleman with long experi-  
ence in the vagaries of government. "At least  
they'll get a bit of paper with colors." Another  
problem is that former Prime Minister Felipe  
González's Socialists—who passed the original  
resolution—lost the last election to the con-  
servative Partido Popular, which, not surpris-  
ingly, stresses its future as the party of corpo-  
rate growth while playing down its visceral  
links to the fascist past.

Inside the Palacio del Congreso the narrow  
halls of power are in chaos. There is an enor-  
mous crush of media. After a wait of three  
hours, a brief ceremony has just been held. Jack  
Shafraan, a youthful *brigadista* from Westchester,  
is unimpressed: "We were herded into a large  
anteroom. It had great murals. The vice-presi-  
dent gave an address in Spanish, and one of  
the *brigadistas* replied. Then we went very slow-  
ly into the Chamber of Deputies, someone said  
some unintelligible words, and we were all told  
to leave. It was a nonevent. There were a  
bunch of deputies who had their pictures tak-  
en. That was the only noteworthy thing."



The speakers, as well as those photographed, are all Socialists. The forward-looking PP has balked; all but two of the 150-odd conservative deputies have found more pressing engagements, notably the president of the Congress, Federico Trillo. (Trillo, a fleshy-faced politico with the judgmental glare of an ambitious cleric, could in a pinch be termed the Iberian Newt Gingrich.) His absence, on the slimmest of pretexts, incenses the Homenaje organizers. The next day, newspapers across the political spectrum will express varying degrees of outrage at the president's discourtesy, ignorance, and lack of style; one will accuse him of being a revanchist. A furious coordinator claims that Trillo, despite his excuses, has said privately that he "would not receive people who had killed his father's friends." When I try to get her name and source for this quote, she refuses

## EVEN IN THE DEEP TWILIGHT OF THEIR LIVES, THESE MEN'S EYES TWINKLE WITH A PROFOUND DISRESPECT FOR AUTHORITY, AN UNTOUCHABLE SERENITY

and becomes quite terrified, blurting out that she is an *anarquista* and that her father was killed by Franco.

Through the halls the aimless crush continues. The old men are everywhere, their sparkle gone. Some are trying to sit, exhausted; others—walkers and canes superfluous—are being carried along by the crowd. None appear to be holding bits of paper with colors. In the Chamber of Deputies many are still scattered around its steeply raked concentric circles, tottering along rows of empty seats or leaning breathlessly on the railings. One elderly British woman has lapsed into a coma and is being attended to by two medics. (She will die the next day without regaining consciousness.)

Back outside in the dazzling blue air, Jack Shafran has hooked up with his old pal Milt Wolff. Wolff grins savagely: "Goddamn Republicans!"

"It was a bit insulting," agrees Shafran. "I've always bent over backwards to be nice to them."

The octogenarians crash off in search of lunch, the slight already forgotten. For veterans of a dozen real and political wars, the collective tantrum of Franco's yuppie heirs is very small beer. The *brigadistas'* sense of honor is too deep to be tarred by such posturing. Long ago they embraced the battles that went with the life-changing decision they'd made. The sad absurdity of victorious old soldiers does not cling to these men. Their bearing is not military. Even in the deep twilight of their lives, their fading

eyes twinkle with a profound disrespect for authority. A woman from the BBC notices that quite a few have come with considerable younger female companions, few of them wives. These men are of a different temper than we think of as veterans. They aren't respectable, they aren't pillars of the community in their act of self-sacrifice they refused to conform, to buckle in the face of the century's enemy. They chose to go to war and never got a hero's welcome. It seems to have given them an unapproachable serenity. Contemplating them is like sitting beneath ancient trees. They are not defeated.

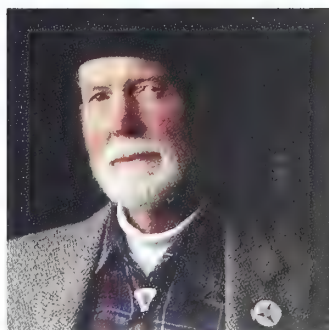
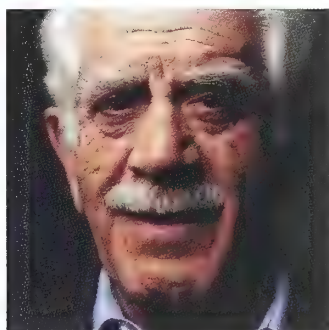
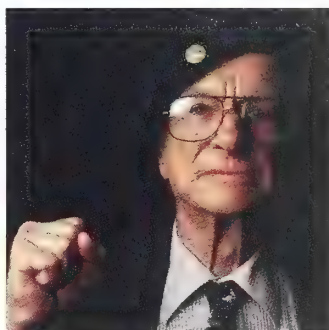
**M**adrid's Palacio de los Deportes ("Sports Palace") is a short wheelchair run from the hotel Convención. A concert has been arranged in honor of the *brigadistas*—a high point in a week's festivities, and throughout the Palacio, a ubiquitous neo-Soviet poster perfectly typifies the earnestness of the Homenaje organizers: semi-representational, it shows an old man with a heavily lined face in a heroic, combative pose. He is mostly bald. His impossibly muscular right arm ends in a determined fist. His left hand holds a heart, which he has apparently just removed from a heart-shaped hole in his chest. It's an uncomfortable tribute to men in their eighties—an evocation less of passionate commitment than of open-heart surgery.

The concert threatens to be just as well-tentioned. There are some fairly big names on the long bill—the stalwart headliner Pablo Ibáñez, a fine flamenco singer named Carrasquero, a very serious folkie named José Antonio Labordeta, and Imanol, a Basque singer whom I've never heard but who could well belong to a Basque branch of the Celtic-music school. It's not quite as heavy-duty as Amnesty International benefit, but there's definite Neil Young–Jackson Browne–Sinéad O'Connor potential. If it were being held in L.A., this concert would be called Brig-Aid.

The Palacio holds 12,000 people. Tonight there will be about 370 *brigadistas* and perhaps half again as many friends and relatives. So the week's events seem to have drawn as little public interest as the American presidential election, which, coincidentally, will be decided tonight. So it's a surprise to round the corner and find an angry, milling crowd of about a thousand people in the mini-plaza outside the Palacio, held back from its glass doors by barricades. Young men are jumping the barricades and hammering furiously on the doors. Instead the ticket takers glare at them with that expression of murderous contempt Spanish police officials love to assume. The theme of the



ening already seems to be "*No pasarán.*" The press is still allowed to pass. The concert is already started and the main body of the stadium is full. As I climb the concrete steps to the galleries, I can hear the soaring flamenco of Carmen Linares. Against all expectations, my skin begins to prickle with emotion. I push through the packed gallery, this sensation balloons. The concert can't have been going for more than ten minutes, but the place is on fire. The passion is palpable, a heavy intoxicating aroma you tactically taste as you inhale. Linares is singing a song with only marginal relevance to the proceedings (it's about the type and two lovers and whether a kiss is a sin), but the audience is *ole-ing* every word, drawn-out phrase she sends from her soul, as if it were another stake to drive through Caudillo's heart. Here the universal aspect of the event has even greater immediacy than at the old bridge. Exactly sixty years ago, Franco's Nazi bombers were hammering the streets and parks and buildings outside—his capital, which he had vowed to destroy rather than give to the *rojos*. On the radio, a Republican deputy named Fernando Valera was drawing the battle lines: "Here in Madrid," he said, "two incompatible civilizations undertake their great struggle: love against hate, peace against war, the fraternity of Christ against the tyranny of the church. . . . Madrid is fighting for Spain, for humanity, for justice, and with the mantle of its blood it shelters all human beings! Madrid! Madrid!" The Nationalist forces were already massed on the sprawling campus of University City a few kilometers to the northwest. On November 9, 1936, many of the bald and gray-haired old foreigners down in the front six rows fought Franco's soldiers hand-to-hand in Madrid's streets and labs and lecture halls. The day before, in Herbert Matthews's words, "[they] traded] with revolutionary songs on their lips through the capital to the front lines, where most of them died in the next ten days." But dead and living held the line.



Passion and fire are quotidian commodities in Spain, routine in the bullring as well as the bar, or for that matter at the tollbooth, but the emotion swirling through this stadium is of a special intensity. It doesn't spring entirely from the past. What's burning the joint up isn't nostalgia or regret. The brooding, faintly celebratory mood at the bridge has given way to something far more inchoate and of the moment: unfinished business, a call to future battle. It's too dark to characterize the several thousand people down on the floor, but the occupants of the galleries, many thousand more, are overwhelmingly young—men and women who look to be in their twenties. They're not here just to listen to the music, for they applaud thunderously every reference to a sixty-year-old war. When Labordeta—a dour, unmoving little figure—starts into his "*Canción de la Libertad*" ("Song of Freedom"), they go nuts. They sing along, bouncing the roof of the stadium on its struts. Beside me a tall, skinny kid barely out of his teens has pushed his way to the rail to sing. He has a shock of curly, black hair and a mouthful of strong, white teeth. It occurs to me that Milton Wolff must have looked a lot like him sixty years ago. Suddenly he starts bellowing: "*España! Mañana! Sera Republicana!*" ("Tomorrow Spain Will Be Republican!") The cry is picked up across the galleries, then down on the floor. The stadium rocks with its message of

menace and yearning. Thousands of young fists pump the air. Everywhere people are weeping. Down in front, the sedate rows of old warriors are literally moved—white handkerchiefs dabbing under spectacles, old shoulders shaking, faces buried in wrinkled hands. I'm having trouble not weeping myself, though for what I'm not quite sure—perhaps because political passion like this seems irretrievably lost in my life. But here it's impossible not to be swept away, as these old men must once have been, by the justness of this cause and the inevitability of its triumph. If there were something to volunteer for tonight, I'd volunteer for it. ■

ABRAHAM LINCOLN  
BRIGADE VETERANS,  
SPAIN, 1996.  
TOP TO BOTTOM:  
TED VELTFORT,  
NICK PAPPAS,  
GEORGE CULLINEN





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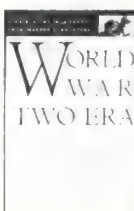
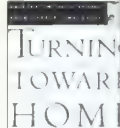


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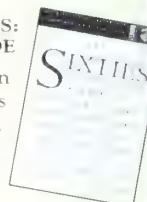


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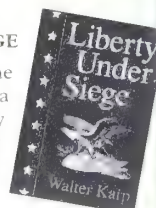


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# BIRD-WATCHING AS A BLOOD SPORT

On the redemptive pain of loving the natural world

By David James Duncan

*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.*

—Matthew 6: 22 & 23

**O**n certain nights when I was a boy, I used to lie in bed in the dark, unable to sleep, because of eyes—staring, glowing eyes, arrayed in a sphere all around me. The eyes seemed to be alive, though they were not visibly attached to bodies or to faces. They were not, so to speak, attached to emotions either: they conveyed no menace, no affection, no curiosity, no consternation. They simply watched me with a vigilance as steady and beautiful as the shining of stars at night.

Because their beauty was so evident, the eyes would not have troubled me were it not for this: I could

*David James Duncan is the author of two novels, *The Brothers K* and *The River Why*, and a collection of stories and nonfiction, *River Teeth*. His most recent article for Harper's Magazine was "A Mickey Mantle Koan," published in the September 1992 issue.*



not escape them. They had the ability to go on staring whether my own eyes were open or shut; they could, in other words, move with me from the real into the imaginary world. I was in awe of this power. My mother and father, the moon and the sun, the entire world, would vanish when I closed my

eyes. But the eyes in the sphere would not. And I didn't even know whose eyes they were! I wanted very much to find out.

I told my big brother about the sphere and asked if he'd ever seen such a thing. His reply was confident but not too consoling: he laughed and told me I'd flipped my lid. I tried my mother. She, too, laughed. "What an imagination!" she said. I let her know, with reluctance, that I did not consider the eyes imaginary. "If they're not imaginary," she said, laughing no longer, "you should ask Jesus to make them go away."

I did ask Jesus. But the eyes went right on staring. And although I spoke of them no more, I was glad that this was Christ's response to my prayer. The sphere of eyes had never threatened or damaged me. It was intense. It was beautiful. Why should I want it to go away? That no one but I seemed to see such things—this was a worry. But the sphere's sudden appearance in bedtime darkness felt like a wonder out of some old myth or fairy tale, and I *wanted* my life to feel like that. So, much as I wanted to know



more about the eyes—who they belonged to, what they wanted of me—I quit worrying and let them blaze away. I really had no choice. And in ancient tales the young heroes are patient. I tried to be the same.

**I**n late winter, when I was ten, I made perhaps my first conscious connection between the mysteries of the inner life and those of the outer world. It happened on a long hike through a doomed suburban forest, when I spotted the largest nest I'd ever seen in the top of a towering, seemingly unclimbable cottonwood tree. Partly to dumbfound the older boys I was with, partly out of incomprehensible yearning, I began shinnying up the limbless lower trunk. Ninety or so feet later, I was clinging to tiny branches just under the massive nest and two magnificent great horned owls were circling the tree-top within twenty feet of me. Circling and staring—till somewhere inside I felt it: *the sense of a sphere. Vigilant, unreadable eyes, watching. Me at the center...*

The nest was so wide that there was no way to climb, or even to see, up into it, so I reached into it with a bare hand. I learned later that had it contained owlets I would have been attacked, and possibly killed, when the adults knocked me out of my precarious perch. But though their orbit of the tree became tighter and they began to let out quiet cries, the owls did not attack: as luck would have it, my groping hand found not owlets but two large, warm eggs. Again out of mixed motives—bravado, yearning, a pagan fantasy to possess my own magnificent bird—I stuck one egg in my coat pocket, then shinnied back down the tree.

The boys below greeted me with everything a conquering hero could hope for: praise for my climbing, awe of my defiance of the adult owls, envy of my prize. "You crazy asshole!" one of them kept saying, in a way that made clear his desire to be thought the same. But seeing the mother owl return to the nest, knowing the egg beneath her was

now destined to be raised alone, the word "crazy" struck me as too kind. I was just a garden-variety asshole. I'd done something stupid, knew it, and knew I lacked the strength and courage to climb the tree again and undo what I'd done.

I tried to make amends in a more arcane way: leaving my friends and their embarrassing praise, I trudged home through the woods, keeping a warm hand around the egg the entire way, then fetched a shoebox, a soft towel, and a lamp with a flexible neck, wrapped the egg in the towel, bent the lamp over it, and began trying to convince myself that I had created a viable nest.

To my amazement, the egg *was* convinced: that night it began to hatch. And the next morning my mother, knowing real education when she saw it, let me stay home from school to watch. It was a surprisingly arduous process. From first crack to full emergence took twenty hours: eggs, to judge by this one, are no easier to escape than wombs. The owlet was four inches long, naked and exhausted, its pink flesh blurred by an outlandish aura of slush-colored fuzz. Its eyes were enormous but covered with bluish skin: no staring, no sense of the mysterious sphere this time. In fact, I'd never seen a pair of eyes look less likely to open or to see—for I was their adoptive mother.

The owlet rested briefly after breaking free, then commenced a ceaseless, open-beaked, wobbly begging. Panicked by the conviction in its body language, I telephoned the zoo, reached its bird keeper, received a scolding for my nest robbing and a prediction of doom, but still proffered the tweezered egg and hamburger and eyedroppered milk that the keeper recommended. And again, to my amazement, the owlet responded. It enjoyed my cooking, it suffered my touch, it responded to my mothering precisely long enough to make me love it. Only then did it proceed to die. Even at birth, horned owls are tough: it took a full day to stop eating, two days to stop begging, another half day to stop writhing and die.

What did not die—what lived in me even now—are the circling, vigilant eyes of the parent owl. The eyes that I betrayed.

**V**igilant, glowing eyes, arrayed in a sphere all around me... Even to this day, no action such a thing puts me—both as a storyteller and as a character in my own story—in way over my head. Yet if deeper truths do indeed dwell in depths, there would seem to be no way to reach them without some sort of drowning.

There I'd lie, then, once in an unpredictable while, year after year, hood year, surrounded by eyes. For that always appeared after the room was dark, the house quiet, and I was still, yet far from sleep. They did not appear by opening; they simply eased into visibility the way stars at dusk. They never blinked, never retreated, never glanced to either side. They watched me, periodically, no other eyes have I ever felt so purely perceived.

In appearance they were distinctly nonhuman. They reminded me a little of angels, a little of owls, and a little of wild animals whose eyes suddenly lit by the headlights of passing cars. They varied in size; some stared at me from varying distances. They varied in color too, to recall shades of green, yellow, orange, all of which seemed wrong for angels. It also seemed angelical, wrong, but beautifully so, that the colors glowed.

Another over-my-head mystery: the eyes in the sphere would array themselves not just in front of me but above, below, and behind me. What I mean to imply is a physical impossibility. The sphere of eyes was visible in *all* directions. In that thousandfold presence I became a point of pure perception suspended inside an encompassing globe. For a long time I drew no conclusion from this; I merely basked in it. As I grew older, though, I realized that I must see the sphere not through physical eyes, or even through my mind's eye, but through an eye that I hadn't been aware of possessing—an eye that could see in all directions at once.

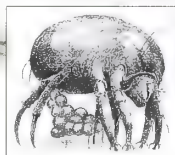
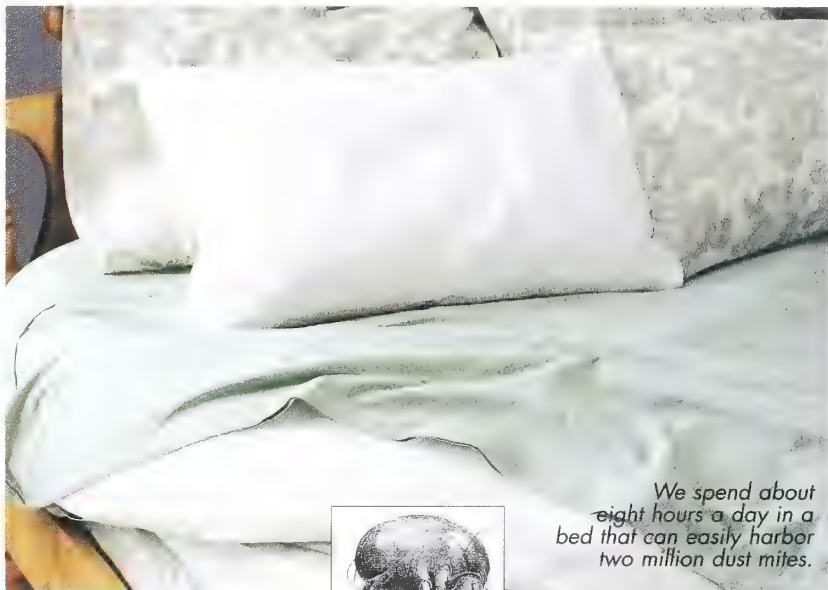
Nothing else on earth had come



ed me to see in this way. Nothing  
e had ever watched me in this  
ot ov. So no matter how many times  
sphere came, I felt awestruck by  
arrival. Awestruck and com-  
led, no matter how late the hour,  
stare back. But to be surrounded  
d stared at creates an air of huge  
pectation. In the eyes' presence,  
he nothing enormously good or bad  
ways seemed about to happen. And  
pense is exhausting. So it was al-  
me I who lost consciousness and  
the eyes staring at no one. Until,  
an te winter not long before adoles-  
nce, I realized that for weeks now,  
perhaps months, the vigilant  
ere had ceased to visit.  
I've seen nothing like the sphere  
eyes since boyhood. But I've de-  
ribed my recurring vision (or  
hosis) for a reason: I have con-  
ued now and then to encounter  
ual bird eyes—like those of the  
cling great horned owls—that  
ve suddenly struck me as living  
ugees of that mysterious child-  
od sphere. I've even begun,  
inks to these ongoing encounters,  
suspect that the sphere, though  
unseen, might in some  
way still surround me...

n 1968, just days after receiving  
first driver's license, I am driving  
ough a small town in a nighttime  
e of commuter traffic when I see,  
the headlight beams of the car  
ead of me, a small brown ball  
ling in the street. The car does  
t slow as it drives over the ball.  
eing no kids at the curb, I, too,  
oose not to slow. Then the ball  
ls out from under the car in front,  
ears in my own headlights, and I  
that it is not a ball but a balled-  
screech owl.  
It is uninjured but blown off its  
t. And having failed to slow, I  
w have no choice but to straddle  
It stares straight into my head-  
hts, eyes glowing as I take aim—  
d I feel myself fall, once again, in-  
a watched center, feel something  
y good or bad about to happen.  
en it does. Just as I pass over, the  
l catches its balance, gathers itself  
a leap into flight, and I feel—in  
e soles of my feet, in my legs, and  
the way up my spine—the fatal

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thud of its head against the bottom of my car. I see, in the rearview mirror, the epileptic thrashing and the cloud of feathers, see the next car, too, run it over, and the next and the next. I do not go back. I already know that I can revere a creature, mother a creature, want nothing but to love a creature, yet still kill it. I also know that what can't be killed—what will remain inside—is that moment's glowing contact with its eyes.

**H**ighway 101, Tillamook County, Oregon. Again alone in a car, on the bridge over Beaver Creek, I turn toward the railing and see a solitary snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*). My field guide calls the snipe "a secretive bird of . . . marshes, and sodden fields." But this one is standing, calm and incongruous as a would-be bus passenger, right on the bridge's concrete sidewalk. I immediately brake—having learned the necessity of this from the brown ball years before. But as I pass by the snipe doesn't fly, doesn't even flinch. Knowing that something isn't right, I pull over, walk back to the bridge, and creep up on the bird, hoping it won't flush out in front of a passing car. It watches me. I move in close, cup it in my hands. No struggle. The snipe just stares. I stand it in my palm. Free to fly, the bird stays, a child's dream—the wild creature you can pet—come true. I stare at it. It stares at me. Cars come and go. The bird radiates warmth. My hand returns it. The sphere closes around us. It is the peace of the sphere itself, I believe, that keeps me from seeing for so long that the entire top of the bird's skull is gone.

I carry the snipe under the bridge, sit cross-legged by the creek where no one can see me, and stand it again in my palm. I then begin trying to concoct a rite that will remove the treachery from a mercy killing. I start with simple admiration: the camouflage plumage, sabre-shaped tail feathers, earth-probe bill, black pearl eyes. I then try memory: Fishing alone on the wide-open estuaries, I have come upon many *Gallinago galli-*

*nago* and the memorable encounters have all been the same. Silent and unseen, from very high in the sky, a lone snipe drops into a dive, builds up great speed, and, as it nears the ground, veers. This veering is their magic: it turns the tail feathers into drumsticks and the sky into a taut skin that explodes in an impossibly loud sound known as "winnowing." A nineteenth-century ornithologist likened the snipe's winnowing sound to "the cantering of a horse . . . over a hard hollow road." An accurate description, as far as it goes. But the terror of these horses, when you're alone on a misty estuary, is that you've no hint of their existence till they're suddenly riding down on you out of empty grayness.

I congratulate my snipe, as part of our death rite, on its ability to terrify. I sing to it, stroke it, beg its forgiveness. It stands in my palm, pulse bubbling in the hopeless wound, watches me serenely, lets me say or do as I please. All in all, though, I feel our preparatory rite is a near perfect failure, for in admiring and stroking and singing to such a bird, love begins. It is love, therefore, that I must crush with a rock, and love that I entomb, still warm, in a little stone cairn. It is love whose two black pearls join my growing sphere. So it is love that still watches me.

Never blinking. Never closing.

**T**here is a passage in Plato that won't leave me in peace. "The natural property of a wing is to raise that which is heavy and carry it aloft to the region where the gods dwell," Socrates notes in the *Phaedrus*. Later, he says that "all are eager to reach the heights . . . [but as most souls] travel they trample and tread upon one another, this one striving to outstrip that. Thus confusion ensues, and conflict and grievous sweat. Whereupon, . . . many are lamed, and many have their wings all broken, and for all their toiling they are balked, every one, of the full vision of being, and departing therefrom, they feed upon the food of semblance."

In this speech, Socrates takes for

granted two things I've always felt but have never heard a salary American teacher mention. One is the idea that all of us in a sense "eat" with our eyes but that what we eat thanks to our collective trampling and treading, are illusions: "the food of semblance." The other is the powerful link between spiritual life and bird life. The natural property of a wing is indeed to carry that which is heavy aloft, literally and spiritually. And the American relationship with the wing is characterized by the shotgun, the drained wetland, and the oblivious speeding car.

A second Platonic passage that haunts me, this one from *Timaeus*, is an account of the origin of vision. When the gods put together the human body, Plato writes they placed "in the vessel of the head, . . . a face in which they inserted organs to minister in all things the providence of the soul . . . And the organs they first contrived eyes to give light . . ." Not to receive light: to give it. As the *Timaeus* says, the gods made "the pure light which is within us . . . to flow through the eyes in a stream smooth and dense . . ." When the outer light of day meets this inner light it proceeds from us and the two lights "coalesce" upon an external object; the result is "that perception which we call sight."

This passage resonates beautifully with Christ's "The light of the body is the eye." And with Walt Whitman's "From the eyesight proceed another eyesight . . ." And Rudyard Kipling's "Close both eyes/to see with the other eye." And Lao Tzu's "He who having used the outer-light cannot turn to the inner-light/Is the body preserved from all harm." Yet we discuss no such theories of vision in any church, school, or science class I ever attended. The older I get the more serious this omission feels.

**I** was raised, like most people of my generation—and Kodak-educated Americans, to believe that the eye works like a camera: an external light falls on an external object, glances off that object, enters the pupil (aperture), alights upon the retina (film)



delivered by the nerves (mailed) the brain (darkroom), processed instantly (just the way we Americans like it), then stored in the memory (photo album) as an image (snapshot). This metaphor works well enough as a mechanistic depiction of the eyeball. What we black customers tend to forget is that the eye is only the instrument of sight, not the sense of it.

If we focus not on how the eyeball works but on how we experience our sense of sight in action, the camera becomes a hopelessly imperfect model. We all live, at all times, in the center of an extremely complex, perfectly visible sphere. There is at all times a visible ceiling or sky above us, a visible floor or ground below, and an almost infinite number of visible objects occupying a 360-degree surround.

Human vision is as remarkable as what it screens out, or simply as to see, as for what it actually perceives. Our sight zooms in constantly on details, blinding us to the surround; it pans, constantly, over the surround's surface, giving us "the view" but no detail; it is distracted, constantly, by desire, daydreams, moods, fantasies, during which we see outward objects yet perceive them not at all. This is hardly the performance of a Kodak product. If our eyes were replaced by cameras, we all deserve our money back.

Human vision in action reminds me of many things more than cameras. A fiberscope, for one. The various forms of fiberscope (arthroscope, proctoscope, etc.) consist of a bundle of transparent fibers through which images can be transmitted, enabling surgeons to probe the human body, focus on minuscule bits of tissue, enlarge and project these bits on a monitor, and operate on this "technologically enclosed" tissue with previously impossible accuracy. Vision, as I experience my own, is a similarly exact, selective, and often surgical procedure—a procedure I perform involuntarily on the body of the world, with sometimes joyous,

and sometimes deadly, results.

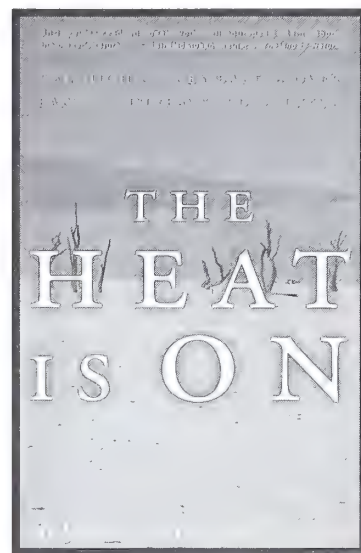
Another analogy between vision and fiber-optic surgery: any fiber-optic surgical device does not merely transmit images of tissue; it also illuminates tissue. The interior of our bodies cannot be lit from outside: what a surgeon perceives through an arthroscope is therefore dependent not on external lights but on a tiny light inside the device itself. In a similar way, our perceptions of the world depend not only on exterior lights that bounce "camera-style" off of objects and into our eyes but on an internal light or energy that proceeds "arthroscope-style" from within, outward, illuminating the few objects we choose to perceive.

If this sounds too wild or metaphysical to describe plain day-to-day seeing, it's a metaphysics that we all practice constantly, in perfectly mundane ways. While writing the preceding paragraph, for instance, I swiveled my eyes from the page to grab a blue ceramic coffee cup from a shelf directly behind me. En route to and from this cup my eyes moved across dozens of plainly lit objects. Yet I perceived none of them. By retracing, slowly, my eyes' route to the cup, I see that they swept across a brass banker's lamp, a Japanese painting of Ebisu playing a red fish on a cane pole, a photo of Meher Baba feeding a monkey, an old L. C. Smith & Bros. typewriter, a bunny-ears cactus, an almost life-size figurative sculpture, two jars full of pens and pencils, fifty or so books, and a large window. Yet I saw none of this. Something in me sought an object it knew to be blue, behind me, and full of hot caffeine—sought it so decisively that I turned 180 degrees, "filming" all the way, yet made an essentially blind turn.

This "seeing blindness" is the great contradiction of human eyesight. Why, with our eyes open, don't we simply see every well-lit object? "[C]onfusion ensues, and conflict and grievous sweat." For we are "balked . . . of the full vision of being" and do indeed "feed upon the food of semblance." Vision is a form of reception. But to an even greater extent it is a form of selection and pro-

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jection. And what concerns me, what scares me at times, is the extent to which my selections and projections are at my command.

How to see more? How to see more clearly? Light is a form of energy. Humans possess energy and to some extent control its ebbs and flows. Can we then aspire to control our inner light? Can we direct the eyes' arthroscopic procedures? How sure are we, lacking such direction, of the surgeon's integrity, or even of his identity? We know so little of inner light sources, speak so little of them, sound so flaky when we do, yet our seeing illuminates so little of our world! I want to know how to aim my inner light, how to clean its lenses, how to recharge its battery. I want access to the control panel, to the joystick, or at least to the bloody on/off switch! I want hours, *innocuous* hours, in which to fool with my light till I know just how and just when to aim it, and how far, high, and deep it can shine. Because without such control—without a reliable, directable inner light source—I frighten myself. For I have sometimes looked at a living object, even a beloved object, and have seen illusions, shadows, nothing at all.

And still I have performed the surgery ...

I am haunted by a grebe. A grebe encountered and arthroscopically operated upon by my own two eyes, in the mid-1980s, at the height of the Reagan-Watt-Crowell-Bush-Luhan-Hodell-Hatfield-Packwood rape and pillage of my homeland, the Oregon Cascades and Coast Ranges; height of the destruction of the world I had grown up in and loved and given my writing life to; height of an eight-year spate of Pacific Northwest deforestation that outpaced the rate in Brazil; height of the war on rivers, birds, wildlife, small towns, biological diversity, tolerance, mercy, and beauty; height of my personal rage; the depth of my despair; height of my need for light.

Far from aware of this need, I took a long walk, on the first clear afternoon following a tremendous November storm, on a deserted Pa-

cific beach—a beach beautifully wed, in the entire 360-degree surround, to my mood. The storm surf and swell were enormous. The air was a constant, crushing roar. Spin-drift was everywhere. So were sand dollars, washed up by the storm as if even the ocean, in that self-absorbed era, were liquidating its inventory in the name of quick currency. The hills to the east were logged bald. The sun, as it sank, grew enormous and red. The stumps and my skin turned the same angry orange. My shadow grew a hundred feet long, fell clear to the high-tide line, which to my half-crazed King Learian satisfaction was a graveyard: storm-killed murrets, oil-killed puffins, carcasses of gulls tangled in washed-up shreds of net, the carcass of a sea lion shot, most likely, by a fisherman who blamed it for the salmon no longer returning from a drift-netted, trawler-raked ocean to rivers mud-choked by logging.

As a lifelong Oregon coast fisherman, I had a few beautiful secrets. I could, right up until that autumn, still sneak into one stream in a virgin cedar- and hemlock-lined canyon, find big, wild steelhead and salmon in a place that felt primordial, and have them all to myself. That year, however, the elk from the vast surrounding clearcuts—hundreds of cuts, hence hundreds of elk—had been squeezed from their once vast range into that last intact canyon. And having nowhere else to go they crossed and recrossed the stream every day, right in the gravel tail-outs where the salmon and steelhead spawn, till they obliterated the redds, pulverized eggs and alevin, turned my secret stream's banks into an elk-made quagmire reminiscent of the worst riparian cattle damage I'd ever seen—a quagmire that sloughed into the little river with every rain, suffocating the salmon fry that had escaped the countless hooves.

When native elk, to remain alive, are forced to wipe out native salmon, it is time, in my book, to get sad. I quit fishing, exercised my rights as a citizen, and wrote "my" Republican senators the usual letters of distress. They answered with more loads of

three- and four- and five-hundred-year-old logs shipped away to Japan as if they were nosebags the senators had grown in their own D.C. flower boxes. Meanwhile, robbed of food and habitat by the same voracious clearcuts, the black bears came down out of my home forest, moved into marsh near town, and lived by raiding garbage cans and dogfood bowls at night. Since this posed a danger to humans, the Fish and Wildlife people came in and shot them six in a week. And the owl that used to sing to me mornings, attracted to the lights after I'd written at night—the owl that scared me worse than winnowing snipes, actually, because it happened to be a northern spotted, which has an insane guffaw of a morning cry—was now a pretence, a nonexistent pawn, a hallucination on some poor dumb logger's cap. And in its stead, as if even the Pentagon grieved its passing, we built a forest-funded graph of a bomber whose stealth in flight was perfect as an owl's.

So down the storm-smashed beach I strolled that bleak November, kicking at dead birds and drowned logging dreck, wondering what reason still had to be grateful to live on this "scenic" Oregon coast, wondering what possible definition of "democracy" I represented through my freedom to write, without persecution or incarceration, such words as

Dear Senator Packwood,

I know you've got huge personal problems, but please! Our home here is dying, the only home we have, and we're bound by a political system which none of the forces killing us can be stopped except through you. Please don't get mad, don't think this political or personal, please know I'm only begging for our lives when I say that our last few trees are still falling and our mills have closed and our people are sad and broke and lied to. And our schools are in ruins, our totipole owl dead, and our elk jammed in a few canyons, pulverizing our last spawning beds with hooves they've got no other place to set down, so that the salmon we cherish, salmon our whole Chain of Being needs to remain unbroken, salmon that have forever climbed these rivers, nailing their shining bodies



nely beds of gravel that tiny silver  
ring may live, they no longer come.  
our bears, old honeypaws, the joy  
tracks alone gave our children,  
too, gone, and skinned, their bod-  
so human! And our kids, our vote-  
kids, their large clear eyes now  
ating at stumps and at slash burns  
at sunlight that shouldn't be there,  
ating at Game Boys and TVs and  
queer ads, squinting at anything  
er than turning open-eyed to win-  
and seeing places so ancient and  
cently loved, huge groves and holy  
on, clouds of birds and dream-sized  
als, a whole green world so utterly  
that already they begin to believe  
they only dreamed, they never real-  
ew, any such blessings . . .

That I knew, there on the beach,  
that I'd be writing no such let-  
My politics had become raw  
s for mercy. Prayers, really. And  
y to God, thank you, not to men  
Bob Packwood.

turned, tired, back to the dunes,  
my car, and to the road through  
clearcuts to a cold house I'd once  
t with joy to call home. But just  
of the first dune—eyes red as  
red as the fast-sinking sun—sat  
itary, male western grebe.

nd I was back in the mysterious  
re.

he grebe was sitting in a curl of  
weed at the storm's high-water  
c. His eyes, in the evening sun-  
e, were fire. In the center of each  
e, a black point: punctuation; hot  
spinning round a period. A still-  
e, deep contact, was instantane-  
ous. A life-and-death contract  
ld have been, too. But—sick of  
ans, sick of my own impotence,  
with the knowledge of how  
h had been destroyed—I gazed  
at the grebe through my sickness.  
t its body was beautiful I saw as  
edy. That it seemed uninjured I  
as irony. From studying wildlife-  
books and visiting wildlife-care  
ers, from firsthand experience  
scaups and gulls and murre, I  
v that seldom do humans make a  
erence once a seabird washes  
re. God knew what brought this  
to this beach—hidden damage  
a net, spilled oil, hidden disease,  
ness from lack of food in a dying  
But it wouldn't be here at all, I

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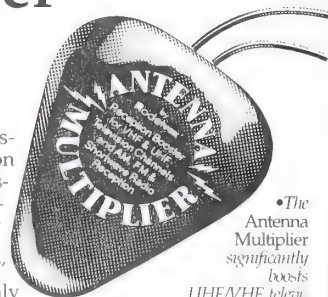
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thought, *if it weren't for me, it would*

Yet, in perfect contradiction to this pessimism, I felt fear. The molten eyes, the bird's curl, height, and size, intimidated me. Its beak was a dagger. When I'd move close, its neck would draw the dagger back, ready to stab. To capture the grebe I'd have to take off my coat and smother it. The beach was cold; the walk back would be long. Once I got it in my car it might fight its way free. Once I got it home, then what?

Light is a form of energy that flows in waves. When a healthy wave strikes an object, we see that object in what we call its "true colors." When a lesser wave strikes the same object, we see even the truest colors as shades of gray. The sun striking that November beach was brilliant. The grebe's eyes were two brilliances. The world was doing its part. It was a wave, a light that failed to come from me, that allowed me to leave that beautiful bird where it lay.

A premonition, or maybe a desire to return to the scene of the crime, brought me to the same beach three days later. I found the grebe in the same curl of kelp, very recently dead, its body, wings, and plumage still perfect, its burning eyes plucked out by gulls. This was bad enough, but months later, when I dredged up my sad tale for a bird-loving friend, he hit the ceiling. When a grebe, he told me, any grebe, is washed up on a beach like that, *all it needs is to be set back in the water*. Grebes require a runway of flat water to take off flying, but they don't need to fly in order to live: even in storm surf they can swim like seals and hunt like little sharks. The grebe I'd found was a fisherman, like me. Just as I can't walk on water, he couldn't walk on land. "He was a hitchhiker," my friend told me. "Needed a lift of a hundred yards or so. And you refused to pick him up."

Years passed, storms came and went, I walked mile upon penitent mile on those same beaches. I never saw another grebe. I only added

two molten eyes to my sphere.

**Y**et once those crimson eyes became part of me, something

changed. Perception, that grebe taught me, is a blood sport. Life itself sometimes hangs by a thread made of nothing but the spirit in which we see. And with life itself at stake, I grew suspicious of my eyes' many easy, dark conclusions. Even the most warranted pessimism began to feel unwarranted. I began to see that hope, however feeble its apparent foundation, bespeaks allegiance to every unlikely beauty that remains intact on earth. And with this inward change, outward things began to change, too.

Hurrying home in my pickup, late (as usual) from a fishing trip, I rounded a blind curve on a coastal byway, noticed a scatter of loose gravel on the asphalt in front of me, and felt an impulse. There was a steep, logged-off slope above this curve. A solitary elk could have kicked such gravel onto the road while crossing. I'm a hell-bent driver when I'm late; I go barreling through mud and gravel, even dodge fallen trees without thinking twice. But this time, though I saw nothing, I had that sudden sense of something good or bad impending, slammed on the brakes, and as my truck slowed from fifty to thirty to ten I was amazed, then elated, to see the gravel turn into birds.

Pine siskins—a whole flock, parked right on the two-lane asphalt. I crept my bumper up next to them. They didn't fly. Maybe thirty siskins, refusing to budge from the road. Reminded me of late-Sixties college students. I got out of my truck, walked up, and joined them. I liked the late Sixties. Such easy excitement! Now I, too, could be killed by the next vehicle to come barreling round the curve!

All but one siskin flew as I sat down next to them. The flock then circled back overhead, chirping vehemently, begging the flightless bird to join them. The siskin in the road, a little male, had been nicked by a previous car, had a small wound above his eye, was in shock. Were it not for my strange impulse, I would have massacred an entire flock of avian altruists as they huddled in sympathy around a helpless comrade. Something inside me, I realized, was

wildly more aware of things than I am—two imperceptible points of molten red, perhaps. I took my wounded siskin home, kept him in my bird box overnight, drove the following morning back to the curve where I'd found him, and he was in perfect health. I was a happy man.

That was just the beginning. I remained haunted by the grebe, but it had been a wondrous haunting, for the accompanying refusal to despair, a new energy began to flow. Not a new energy; it's something to pray for, not something to be smug about. I began, especially when driving in the rain, to feel a simple alertness and an occasional intuition: thousands of miles, thousands of glimpsed road movements, and thousands of glimpsed roadside eyes began to vibrate in concert to help me avoid killing and occasionally even to save, as animals and birds. I am not late in claiming to supernatural skills. I sometimes kill by accident, and intuitions that save lives are almost always purchased, like so many mere

with an earlier being's innocent blood.

**E**xactly a year after I abandoned the grebe, I was driving home down Oregon Coast Highway 101 in a torrential November rain. It was a Sunday night. A steady line of weekend storm watchers was returning to Portland in the pitch dark. The road looked like a narrow black ribbon topped by two endless rows of crazily speeding boats. Because of the terrible visibility, I was watching the road lit not just by my own headlights but by those of the pickup in front of me. It was in the pickup's lights that I happened to glimpse a brown ball rolling along the streaming road.

I hit my brakes instantly, certain of what it was. I was also certain, for the cause it was rolling when I glimpsed it, that it had been run over at least once already, and that the pickup would run it over again. There was time, before the truck did so, for one-syllable prayer: I shouted, "Please!"—terrifying my two passengers. But as I braked and pulled hard toward the highway's right shoulder,



ball rolled out, unscathed, in the up's tailwind and tailwater, then ed itself on the road as I shot It was an adult pygmy owl. knew by its ability to regain its that the owl was not hopelessly ed. But it was too disoriented to be the road. And in my rearview or, approaching at fifty or so s an hour, I saw its doom in the of at least ten cars. Though I'd ed as fast as I could, momentum carried me perhaps two hundred past the owl. I pulled on the ing brake before my truck ed rolling, jumped out without rd to my stunned companions, took off running.

ne approaching line of head- s was maybe two hundred yards r. I couldn't see the tiny owl in dark and distance. Ten cars do- fifty, me on foot doing maybe en, a living bird somewhere in een. I didn't do the math. I just And how right it felt, no matter ! How good it felt to tear eyes- into another November gale, ght down the lane in which a less bird huddled, straight into headlights of ten city-bound —for in this running I'd found a ance that might let me again t, without shame, the crimson of a grebe.

ve played enough ball to have a d sense of trajectories and dis- es. I knew, the instant I spot- the fist-size silhouette in the l car's high beams, that my ds would never reach it in e. I also knew that the lead s driver wouldn't see me or the owl till he or she was upon us, so wouldn't slow for either of still couldn't stop running. It l felt wonderful. To be an erican, a lifelong motorist, and rd lover is to carry a piano's ch of guilt on your back. I was unning my piano.

he owl had been staring, stupe- at the approaching cars. When heard my pounding feet, it veled its gaze at me. Instant re. Great good or ill impending. ard cars in the opposite lane ing up behind me and realized if the cars in my lane did see they might be frightened into

swerving into a head-on crash. I was risking lives besides my own. I had succumbed to a kind of madness. Yet as I sprinted toward the cars I had an unaccountably calm vision of a conceivable, beautiful outcome.

The lead car saw me and hit its horn just as I reached the owl. I swung my right foot in the gentlest possible kick, chipping the bird like a soccer ball toward the road's shoulder. I followed the bird instantly, not quite needing to dive as the lead car shot past, outraged horn blaring. All ten cars shot past. I ignored them, searching the rain gusts and night air. And at the edge of the many headlight beams I suddenly saw my tiny owl in uninjured, earnest flight, *circling straight back toward the traffic-filled highway.*

I don't know what my body did in that moment, whether my heart stopped or my eyes sent out energy, whether my lips and lungs actually uttered the "Please!" When your whole being yearns for one simple thing, it may not be necessary to add the words. All I know is that a gust of sideways rain blasted my owl, its wings twisted in response, and it rose inches over the crisscrossing headlights and car roofs, crossed both lanes, left the highway, and vanished, without once looking back, into the forest and the night.

**T**he eyes, it has been said, are the "windows of the soul." Since the soul is not a literal object but a spiritual one, eyes cannot be the soul's literal windows. But they are openings into and out of living human beings. When our eyes are open, they become not one of our many walls but one of our very few doors. The mouth is another such door. Through it we inhale air that is not ownable, air that we share with every being on earth. And out of our mouths we send words—our personal reshaping of that same communal air.

Seeing, I have come to feel, is the very same kind of process. Through our eyes we inhale light and images we cannot own—light and images shared with every being on earth. And out of our eyes we

exhale a light or a darkness that is the spirit in which we perceive. This visual exhalation, this personal energizing and aiming of perception, is the eyes' speech. It is a reshaping of light as surely as words are a reshaping of air. I therefore feel responsible for my vision. My eye-speech changes the world. Seeing is a blood sport.

I'm still in way over my head. I believe that this is my Maker's intention. I'm in so far over my head that I believe I'll need wings to get out. But even over my head I sense that if all souls are one and the eyes are its windows, then those siskin, owl, snipe, and grebe eyes must all, in a realm outside of time, be my very own. So in killing or saving those eyes, in abandoning or loving them, I kill, save, abandon, or love what is outside of time—that is, what is eternal—in myself. This is Buddhist platitude, Christian and Islamic platitude, Native American platitude too, and platitudes don't make very good literature. But they make excellent aids to memory. And in a world in which one's living eyes and body must fly into split-second meetings with the eyes and bodies of others on wet night roads, storm-smashed beaches, in treetops or on blind curves, one needs all the aids to memory one can get.

The God of the Bible commences creation with an exhalation of light from spirit. Shiva is said to be capable of destroying creation by simply opening an eye. Through a life spent looking, or refusing to look, at an endless stream of other creatures, I've learned that by merely opening my eyes, I, too, take part in the creation and destruction of the world. By abandoning a grebe that entered my sphere of vision, I closed two beautiful molten windows through which I might have gazed upon a real salvation. By kicking a twice-run-over owl skyward, I opened two wondrous dark windows upon the same. One of the terrors of being human, and one of the joys, is that for all our limitations and confusions we have been given power. The life that terrifies me and the life that I adore are one life. ■



# BLACK LETTERS ON A WHITE PAGE

In a new compendium of African American  
literature, a world of politics

By Vince Passaro

Among the books discussed in this essay:

*The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr.  
and Nellie Y. McKay. W. W. Norton. 2,665 pages. \$49.95.

*Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man*, by Henry Louis Gates Jr. Random House. 226 pages. \$22.

*Colored People*, by Henry Louis Gates Jr. Vintage paperback. 216 pages. \$12.

To understand the machinery of contemporary African American cultural studies, one might look at the back cover of the recent *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay. Across the top, in gold type dropping out of a dark green band, stands a blurb from Cornel West: "A classic of splendid proportions," he announces, leaving the reader to wonder whether he is referring to the book's large size or to its contents. What only specialized observers will know is that Gates, the more prominent and influential of the volume's two editors, is Chair of the Afro-American Studies Department at Harvard University, where West, when not busy writing content-free blurbs for Gates's books, reports to him as one of the department's best-known professors. The world of African American studies is a small one, but over the last twenty years it has become enor-

mously influential within American universities and, more recently, in the culture at large.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. sits atop that world. *The Norton Anthology* in the first month of its publication sold more than 30,000 volumes, making it the fastest-selling anthology in the illustrious history of Norton literary textbooks. Gates, a promotional wizard, can be at least partially credited with the book's enormous success. Glowing reports of its achievement appeared in such forums as Frank Rich's op-ed column in the *New York Times*, in that paper's culture pages, and on a *Charlie Rose* show largely dedicated to Gates that aired in February. On other fronts in the Gates empire, one could read almost universally favorable reviews of his recent collection of essays and profiles entitled *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man* and, not long after, similarly positive reviews of *The Dictionary of Global Culture*, co-edited with Kwame Anthony Appiah. And although he was not one of the editors of *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, also

published this year, Oxford turned him for his imprimatur in the form of a foreword to the book.

Having one's name on four major books in a couple of months is an impressive work. Gates's memoir, three years ago, *Colored People*, and similarly well-reviewed, his pieces are regularly published in *The New Yorker*, and he is quoted and captioned by journalists in most significant commentaries about black America. Gates resides now in a position almost unimaginable three decades ago, when he was a young intellectual working shrewdly but rather than within the Black Power movement.

To attain such a position of authority requires several well-developed skills. Hard work certainly helps: Gates has written six books of his own, including four earlier, and received works of literary and cultural criticism; co-written another with West; edited not only *The Dictionary of Global Culture* and *The Norton Anthology* but the collection *Reading*.

Vince Passaro is a contributing editor of Harper's Magazine. His last review, "A Flapping of Scolds," appeared in the January 1997 issue.



k, *Reading Feminist*; and served as  
 s editor for such monstrous proj-  
 as the complete works of Zora  
 le Hurston, the forty-volume  
 mburg Library of Nineteenth-Cen-  
 Black Women Writers, and the  
 ty-volume *African-American  
 men Writers 1910-1940*. In other  
 ds, Gates has made himself the  
 t prolific and influential main-  
 am scholar in the most popular  
 lemic subject of our time.

or the most part this is a fortunate  
 g. Gates ranks as the most able  
 er and critic in his field, and one  
 ie best in literary academia. He is  
 outh prose stylist and a reliably  
 lligent if rarely skeptical critic,  
 whose strength res-  
 s in the convincing  
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 y figures, move-  
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 tical orthodoxy—an  
 odoxy now less ob-  
 usly tilted toward a  
 nct ruling class than  
 nce was, yet more  
 n riddled with in-  
 al contradictions.  
 es thrives in these  
 zones, as his own  
 ing demonstrates.

a *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a  
 ck Man*, a collection of Gates's  
 files published largely in *The  
 u Yorker* over the last few years,  
 may see the personal and politi-  
 passions that animate him and  
 d central to his career as a critic  
 a scholar. The title of the col-  
 ion—a play on the title of Wal-  
 Stevens's poem "Thirteen Ways  
 ooking at a Blackbird"—cap-  
 es Gates's main interests, which  
 e evolved over the last ten years  
 so from the issue of authentic  
 ck expression to the larger ques-  
 n of what is authentic "black-  
 s," especially for black men. The

problem is a personal one. He men-  
 tions it in interviews, in *Thirteen  
 Ways*, in *Colored People*, and else-  
 where. Focusing on such a question  
 puts Gates in a difficult intellectual  
 position, for it posits, and then bale-  
 fully argues against, the assertion  
 that legitimate and authentic cul-  
 ture in America is perceived only as  
 white culture. Therefore, the black  
 artist, writer, scholar, or politician  
 cannot define himself freely but  
 must work within a complex role  
 that already has been established for  
 him—that of the outsider, the out-  
 law, someone heroically disadvan-  
 tagged and separate. This issue of an  
 enforced and disempowering identi-

thinkers and artists often lacks this  
 essential artistic self-confidence.  
 Gates himself touches on the issue,  
 especially in writing about Murray  
 and Baldwin, but ultimately does  
 not meet it head on. To begin to as-  
 sess the problem would be to impute  
 a failure, to condemn certain black  
 writers of his generation.

And condemn he does not. Only  
 in Gates's "outing" of Anatole Bro-  
 yard, a writer who denied his black  
 parentage and spent his life passing as  
 white (the payoff being a job as a book  
 critic for the *Times*), does one sense in  
 Gates a hardness of sentiment and a  
 streak of intellectual disapproval. In-  
 terestingly enough, the Broyard profile

is one of the most ab-  
 sorbing and elegantly  
 written pieces in *Thir-  
 teen Ways*.

The essay about the  
 great critic Albert Mur-  
 ray forms the book's  
 most striking contrast  
 between black writers  
 and critics of Gates's  
 generation and those  
 born earlier. Much of  
 Murray's thinking and  
 writing is aimed at chal-  
 lenging conventional  
 assumptions. He is sus-  
 picious of the reaction  
 to such lovable black  
 literary figures as the po-  
 et Maya Angelou and  
 even asks what no other  
 prominent commenta-  
 tor, black or white, has  
 asked about Toni Mor-

risson's Nobel Prize—whether it was  
 not "tainted with do-goodism." Of  
 course, the Nobel Prizes were invented  
 as "do-goodism"; they have always  
 been "tainted," to use Murray's word,  
 with politics, and the politics have al-  
 ways been left-of-center. Morrison's  
 work will last, I suspect, at least as long  
 as Hemingway's or Steinbeck's. On  
 the issue of Morrison, Gates politely  
 puts down his foot, "agree[ing] to dis-  
 agree" and associating himself with her  
 in the ways major critics traditionally  
 have endorsed certain writers as em-  
 blems both of their era and of the crit-  
 ic's own aesthetic principles.

In Maya Angelou, however, we  
 have something else altogether. In



ty haunts black American writers, of  
 course, but for the best of them it  
 remains secondary. Growing up in  
 more hateful times, writers such as  
 Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray, and  
 James Baldwin forced themselves  
 beyond the constraints of white cul-  
 ture; they understood in a deeper  
 sense their true relation to it (thus  
 can Murray openly admire Thomas  
 Mann and Ellison can praise  
 William Faulkner); they came to  
 value their own worth and to recog-  
 nize the highly individual and essen-  
 tially nonracial difficulty of knowing  
 their own souls. No one has yet ana-  
 lyzed in any extensive way why a  
 later generation of black American



the Murray profile, as elsewhere in these essays, when something negative is said about black writing people do the talking while he remains silent. Murray is not offering no defense. Murray describes Angelou's performance at Bill Clinton's first inaugural as a kind of traditional black entertainment, dazzling the white folks. Gates includes the accusation but lets it sit there, like a burning car in an otherwise empty parking lot. In such silent moments, one realizes that black radicalism, now tenured, has been utterly marginalized, its critical discourse so deadened that a literary figure of Gates's intelligence and stature cannot bring himself to say anything bad about, or leave out of his pantheon, even the most mediocre black artists. At the inaugural, Bill Clinton, whose signature on welfare "reform" would follow three years later, used Maya Angelou, a very weak poet, as a new, mediagenic form of lawn jockey, and no one in the new black-culture orthodoxy, as far as I know, has uttered a word of criticism about her willingness to play the part.

Given the complexity of Gates's role within the black intellectual community and his relationship with the white culture, *The Norton Anthology*, as he initiated it eleven years ago and as it appears with him as co-editor, becomes that much richer an emblem of the multicultural-studies movement. Gates has a unifying sensibility in a field that is fractious by definition. His aesthetic, I suspect, has helped lend the book its tone of distant and established authority, and guided its effort to conceive of African American literature as a coherent development over the last three centuries. But it has also meant the inclusion of work that is not up to par and a suffusion of editorial sentimentality and weak politics.

Nonetheless, the anthology is an immensely interesting and valuable work. It will change the teaching of American literature in the classroom, spotlighting certain works that, because they were once difficult to find, only occasionally made their

way onto university reading lists.

Moreover, the volume may provide the happiest marriage of chronology with theme that I have seen in an anthology. The book is arranged with an introductory section, "The Vernacular Tradition," that moves across all major periods and concentrates on music and the spoken word. Six main sections follow, each informed by the thematically overarching "Vernacular" section: "The Literature of Slavery and Freedom: 1746–1865"; "Literature of the Reconstruction and the New Negro Renaissance," which takes one through 1919; "Harlem Renaissance: 1919–1940"; "Realism, Naturalism, Modernism: 1940–1960"; "The Black Arts Movement: 1960–1970"; and "Literature Since 1970." Within these capacious rooms are stored amazing treasures: the fascinating early slave narratives, for example, and, closely related to them, what can be described as didactic tracts on slavery, which are extraordinary documents insofar as they detail the very mechanisms of repression constructed to prevent such writing. A reader cannot help but recognize something miraculous in these early texts, not for any "defect overcome" by the Africans who produced them but for the lengths to which their overseers went to keep their slaves from mastering the English literary arts. Not only did the government of a given population of slaves depend on this repression; the entire underlying presumption of black inferiority was threatened as well, a fact that the early writers unmistakably recognized and exploited. Among the slave narratives, one of the first and most direct, Olaudah Equiano's "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself," is fascinating for its clarity of expression and its self-confident good humor. Victor Séjour's short story, "The Mulatto," the first known work of fiction by an African American, appears here in the first widely available translation from the French, and it is a small masterpiece. Also included are Harriet Jacobs's "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl," Frances Harper's poems and

essays, and what is considered to be the first African American novel, Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig*.

Frederick Douglass's extraordinary *Narrative of the Life* is reprinted full, as is W.E.B. Du Bois's equally seminal later work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in 1903, containing the prophetic (and stylistically beautiful) lines: "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea." Late in the Harlem Renaissance section, Jean Toomer's "Cane," a breathing Modernistic prose constructed beautifully and powerfully charge

Karimtha is a woman. She who is beauty, perfect as dusk when the sun goes down. She has been married many times. Old men remind her a few years back they rode her like a horse upon their knees. Karimtha smiles, and indulges them when she is in the mood for it. She has comforted them. Karimtha is a woman. Young men run stills to make her money. Young men go to the big cities, run on the road. Young men go to college. They all want to bring money. . . . A child fell out of a womb onto a bed of pine-needles in the forest. Pine-needles are small and sweet.

In the period of intense literary experimentation in Europe and the United States, corresponding roughly to the second generation of liberalism for African Americans, black writers were in a position of unusual freedom in their language and narrative sensibilities; they drew on the cadences, idioms, and vocabularies of both black and white America, and were less hindered by the traditional forms that often bound their European counterparts. By the early twentieth century, African American writers were not only able but eager to "make it new," to use Ezra Pound's exhortation. Especially in the early twentieth century and the Harlem Renaissance period, writers such as Hurston and Claude McKay brought Toomer, among many others, more gracefully into a powerful form of Modernism, echoing the aesthetic sentiment of one of T. S. Eliot's e



for *The Waste Land*: "He Do the e in Different Voices." Their esal historical experience, that of and debasement, is the Modern ic experience. The anthology on and on, more than 2,600 featuring many, many fine writach sharing a culture and a lan- e both permanently separated and yet passionately defining thing, often discussed but never satisfactorily cap- tured, called "America."

he introduction of African ricans to the United States coned in most cases an introduc- to Christianity, and to Ameri- Protestant Christianity in ular. From the mélange of bibli- narratives made available in that ion, African Americans quickly opriated for their own special oses the central Christian narra- of prolonged suffering, isolation, sonment, and eventual redemp- and release. Thus did Exodus, as example, become their tale— ry, escape, trial, justification.

he Vernacular Tradition" as ar- ated by the editors,\* with its whelmingly Christian atmos- e ("Spirituals," "Sermons," even s"), stands over the rest of the ne, giving meaning not only to anguage of the African Ameri-

volume, it must be noted, gives satis- that its editors seem bent on taking Because Norton anthologies are mar- toward freshman survey courses and hool advanced-placement classes, the es often suffer from an unhappy com- on of secondary-school-level explana- and sloppy scholarship. Under the el" section, of all places, in the song l by Me," a footnote for a reference to lease by God of Silas and Paul from ("Thou who rescued Paul and Silas, by me . . .") reads in its entirety: "In ew Testament, [Silas] was a mission- or the Apostles. Paul was one of the Apostles chosen by Jesus." Paul is considered an Apostle. But he is not the twelve and he never met Jesus, so part of this description is wildly inac- . The overall wrongness of the foot- conjures for the reader a team of s of clumsy university scholars, credit- the acknowledgments page, failing to n the story of imprisonment and its nce for a people enslaved, instead cred- and then missing a howler that not one anonymous composers they honor ever have thought to make.

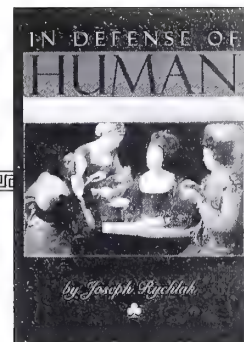
can tradition but to its philosophical foundations as well. The "Sermons" section, also within the introductory "Vernacular Tradition," moves from early verse sermon to Malcolm X. The highlights include Martin Luther King's "I've Been to the Mountaintop," which I have always preferred to his "I Have a Dream" speech, also included here, because the former is personal and an- guished, and improvisationally ex- plains the meaning of King's entire ministry:

I remember in Birmingham, Alaba- ma, when we were in that majestic struggle there we would move out of the 16th Street Baptist Church day af- ter day; by the hundreds we would move out. And Bull Connor would tell them to send the dogs forth and they did come; but we just went before the dogs singing, "Ain't gonna let no- body turn me round." Bull Connor next would say, "Turn the fire hoses on." And as I said to you the other night, Bull Connor didn't know histo- ry. He knew a kind of physics that somehow didn't relate to the trans- physics that we knew about. And that was the fact that there was a certain kind of fire that no water could put out. And we went before the fire hoses; we had known water. If we were Baptist or some other denomination, we had been immersed. If we were Methodist, and some others, we had been sprinkled, but we knew water.

Unfortunately, though, there is an introduction to the section.

The African American sermon is a complex oratorical form with signifi- cant differences from religion to reli- gion, denomination to denomination, region to region, and era to era. Ser- mons heard in a northern Nation of Islam mosque differ significantly from those heard in a down-home South- ern Baptist church. Those flattening out all of these differences to expound on the black sermon deny this pulchri- tudinous variety and do a serious in- justice to history and its unfurling.

Hyperbole and jargon rule the day. Repeatedly, and nowhere more than in the "Sermons" section, is the theme of "the vernacular tradition" abused in service of a favorite social theory of contemporary academics: a denial of the efficacy of actual indi- vidual authorship and a new defini-



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tion of literature is a form of cultural production, the result of "call and response" between speaker and listener, the expression of whole communities. I, for one, have always preferred the late Harold Brodkey's definition of literature, pure and explicit in its hegemonic tendencies: "I speak, you listen."

**F**ortunately we have the writers themselves. The nineteenth-century poetry and commentary by black women would make a fascinating volume of its own (or forty volumes, as noted above); the early slave narratives and slave poetry are composed of a language that feels immediate and, in the way that only Southern American writing can be, both elegant and colloquial in describing a circumstantial horror, often taking a surprisingly long historical view. Also to be visited in this volume are the incomparable greats of black literature in this century, including Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Ellison, Richard Wright, Hurston, Baldwin, Murray, Chester Himes (though not enough of him), and Gwendolyn Brooks. Among contemporary authors, there are arrays of the best American writers working today, including John Edgar Wideman, Jamaica Kincaid, James Alan McPherson, and Walter Mosley.

But perhaps most astonishing are the folktales, which constitute the single most entertaining and splendid portion of the anthology. I am a particular fan of "Deer Hunting Story":

You know Ole Massa took a nigger deer huntin' and posted him in his place and told him, says, "Now you wait right here and keep yo' gun reformed and ready. Ah'm goin' 'round de hill and skeer up de deer and head him his way. When he come past, you shoot."

De nigger says, "Yessuh, Ah sho' will, Massa."

He set there and waited wid de gun all cocked and after a while de deer come tearin' past him. He didn't make a move to shoot de deer so he went on about his business. After while de white man come on 'round de hill and ast de nigger: "Did you kill de deer?"

De nigger says: "Ah ain't seen no deer pass here yet."

Massa says: "Yes, so did. You could ha' help but see him. He come right dis way."

Nigger says: "Well Ah sho' ain't seen none. All Ah seen was a white man come thru here wid a pack of chairs on his head and Ah tipped my hat to him and waited for de deer."

This comes from Zora Neale Hurston's collection of folktales heard, collected, and remembered, *Mules and Men*. Unfortunately, in a fit of caution, perhaps necessary given the passionately un-ironic audience that has created such a large market for this book, the editors add a footnote: "Note the deliberate spoofing of the white 'Massa' by the ostensibly respectful 'nigger.'" If there is a vernacular tradition in African American literature, there is an equally significant tradition of multilayered irony, and these tweedy, altogether Caucasian editorial moments do their best to undermine it.

**L**ike every Norton anthology, the present volume also houses a whole family of cultural and political assumptions that the genre cannot acknowledge. Convention dictates that one must call this an "Anthology of Literature," but literature as defined by most readers outside the university makes up only a portion of its entries. Documents of exclusively historical interest take up what seems an unprecedented share of the cabin space, and for reasons that are obvious but not always compelling, more pages here are devoted to song lyrics, by a good deal, than in any other serious literature anthology I have seen. (In a new twist, Norton also offers, through a mail-in card, an accompanying CD for \$15.99.) The reader quickly understands that "the vernacular" was established in music and in other forms of public discourse and that its particular tropes and rhythms unify African American cultural experience and absolutely dominate its literary sensibilities. A fifth or a quarter of the songs appearing here would have done just as well. The inclusion of rap songs doesn't particularly help; they are not on the whole very interesting to read, and their relationship

to contemporary African American writing, or within the increasingly fractionalized African American culture, is not explained. As is, we left to assume that "Tell Pharaoh/Let my people go" and the jealous punks can't stop dunk" are both simply parts of the same vital cultural experience.

On the level of strictly literary particulars, the anthology contains many choices that one has to question: Alice Walker, Terry McMillan and Amiri Baraka are overrepresented here, and overrespected, for matter. Walker, for instance, is given three times the space of one of the best writers in the country, Jamaica Kincaid, and considerably more room than a host of other, better writers. A fine author of short stories, Edward P. Jones, is not here at all, surprisingly. Even looked at charitably, at least a dozen contemporary writers do not deserve to be in this volume.

Take, for example, this excerpt from Walker's *The Color Purple*:

Sinners have more good time to say.

You know why? she ast.

Cause you ain't all the time working bout God, I say.

Naw, that ain't it, she say. Us working bout God a lot. But once us feel led by God, us do the best us can to please him with what us like.

You telling me God love you, you ain't never done nothing for him? I mean, not go to church, sing in choir, feed the preacher and all that?

But if God love me, Celie, I do have to do all that. Unless I want There's a lot of other things I can do that I speck God likes.

Like what? I ast.

Oh, she say, I can lay back and admire stuff. Be happy.

This is like Zora Neale Hurston sold to a Hallmark indoctrination campaign.

The paradoxical position of the professors who edited the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (there are eleven in all, plus dozens of professors and graduate students who assisted in research), curators, and to some degree mummifying black American culture in the process, can be imaginatively recorded



ed in their choice to reprint the  
s of Gil Scott-Heron's "The  
lution Will Not Be Televised,"  
n they claim, interestingly, had  
al impact" on rap.  
ave heard the recording many  
s but never read its lines stark  
ne page: "The revolution will  
be televised./The revolution  
not be brought to you by Xerox  
ur parts without commercial in-  
ption..." Clearly, Scott-Heron  
t foresee PBS's "Eyes on the  
." In the full musical perfor-  
ce, one hears Scott-Heron's  
e, anger, adamancy, and omi-  
rhythm. What struck me while  
ing the lyrics was that Scott-  
on, wrongly predicting victory  
e there would be only defeat,  
rtheless puts his finger on ex-  
the mechanisms by which late-  
tieth-century, high-tech capi-  
n absorbs and nullifies any idea,  
ure, word, or image. The revolu-  
was, in fact, beautifully tele-  
d, packaged on video, and  
can American literature has  
itself been packaged, bound,  
ed, and marketed. The condi-  
of American blacks worsens  
orably. As Gates himself ob-  
es in *Thirteen Ways of Looking at  
ack Man*, "Thirteen decades  
e passed since Emancipation,  
half of our black men between  
ty-four and thirty-five are with-  
full-time employment. One  
k man graduates from college for  
y hundred who go to jail. Al-  
t half of black children live in  
erty." One looks up from the  
with this in mind, and there is  
e comfort left in the collection.  
we all supposed to join in the  
onal book party, rejoice with  
rlie Rose? Sure. Norton has pub-  
ed the *Anthology of African  
merican Literature*; Gates and Cor-  
West are entrenched at Harvard  
are doing very well indeed. But  
Norton *Anthology of African  
merican Literature*, filled with gen-  
American treasure, remains a  
fully paradoxical volume, for  
politics that drive it are pro-  
ndly insufficient both to honor  
t lies in the book or the prob-  
s those politics were once in-  
ted to address. ■

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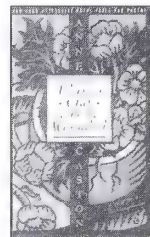
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S	U	N	D	A	N	C	E	N	A	N	S	W	E	R	E	D

### SOLUTION TO THE JUNE PUZZLE

#### NOTES FOR "DOWN- ERS"

Notes: The unclued entries are American ski resorts. Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (\*).

CLUES: ACROSS: 1. a (s-s-ess) or; 9. kis(s)ers\*; 17. so(litar\*)y; 18. \*; 19. d(ead)-ill; 20. l(i)lac (rev.); 23. hidden; 25. whee(l); 27. bass(i)net; 29. me-owed; 31. t-ago (rev.); 33. two mngs.; 35. too(k); 36. ex-tinct; 38. \*; 39. win-o; 40. m-orgue\*; 42. hidden. DOWN: 2. \*; 3. rev.; 4. two mngs.; 5. scar-a-b; 6. a-RKO (rev.); 7. (a)untie; 10. homonym; 11. rev.; 12. rev.; 13. two mngs.; 15. re(al)ly; 16. \*; 21. n-ewer; 22. hidden rev.; 24. \*; 26. \*; 28. \*; 30. \*; 32. (m)aims; 34. homonym; 35. (Rin Tin) Tin.

SOLUTION TO JUNE DOUBLE ACROSTIC (NO. 174). CYRA MCFADDEN: RAIN OR SHINE. When my mother stood on a box, she danced. No one was less suited to pie baking... when... she cooked, the food was inedible... She'd have preferred to take a pill in order to stay nourished and not waste time better spent kicking up her heels.

CONTEST RULES: Send the quotation, the name of the author, and the title of the work, together with your name and address, to Double Acrostic No. 175, *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by July 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. The solution will be printed in the August issue. Winners of the May Double Acrostic (No. 173) are Susan Fishman, Flushing, New York; Len Gaetano, Brookline, Massachusetts; and Joan R. Robinson, Ivoryton, Connecticut.



# RAILROAD INCIDENT, AUGUST 1995

By David Means

**T**he declivity where he sat to rest was part of a railroad bed blasted out of the hard shale and lime deposits cut by the Hudson River, which was just down the hill, out of sight, hidden by forestation, backyards, homes. The wind eased through the weeds, pressing on both sides of the track, died, and then came up again hinting of seaweed—the sea miles away opening up into the great harbor of New York, the sea urged by the moon's gravity up the Hudson, that deep yielding estuary, and arriving as a hint of salt in the air, against his face, vised between his knees; he was tasting his own salt on his lips, for he'd been walking miles and it was a hot evening. He was a dainty man in a white dress shirt tucked into pressed jeans; he was the kind of man who had his jeans dry-cleaned; he was used to unwrapping his garments, chemically processed, creased, charted out and sanitized, from long glimmering bags. Up the road five miles his dark blue BMW idled still—



enough fumes to keep it going—parked far to the side of the shoulder so that it gave the appearance of being one of the many such cars, people up from the city for the summer night pausing to retrieve some lost memory or to taste the wooded air one more time before going home to the embrace of concrete. He was the kind of man who would leave his car running for the sake of appearances, to help lull an imaginary stranger into an illusory sense of stability: all was right with the world, she would think, passing, going about her business; when he stumbled out of the car it was with her in mind, some strange woman passing on her way home, that he left it running.

Despite the ache in his feet from an awkward walk after three miles of railroad, he couldn't help notice, hunched as he was, the splendor of this place in the world beneath a vast open sky, dark and broken only by the passing of a car on the road above him; his journey had come down to him slowly, harder over the course of several hours; his head had adjusted to the darkness and guided him safely to this place. He extended his legs and began to take his shoes off, edging the sole with the back of the other shoe; it was the kind of man who untied his shoes first, removed one and then the other, seated on the little step stool else on the edge of his bed; he was so the kind of man who used an ice shoehorn to get them on in the morning, relishing the feel of his socks sliding firmly against cool smooth leather (the use of an instrument for the simple task); but this wasn't the time, the place for practiced rituals; he had come to betray himself, to rid himself of such things. He left them in the bushes, a lonely pair of fine, handmade Italians, one nestled against

*David Means is the author of A Quick Kiss of Redemption, a collection of stories. He is currently at work on a novel.*



lovingly, front to front. He d slowly.

ound the curve there was gh light—defused across the sky—to make out the shards of n bottles (if he'd been looking instead of forward). The piece epped on, from an old malt r bottle, was as jagged as the h Alps, the round base of the e forming a perfect support for protrusion, the only piece of for yards, seated neatly against ail plate; it went into his heel ly, cutting firmly into the hard opening a wound that sent him g sideways. It was one of those that open up slowly into the ilities of their pain, widening a small point into a cone; this he kind of cut that gave the al sense of being unlimited in pain it would eventually pro- he sat there and thought about a moment, not making a game but trying to conjure up some e from a Red Cross handbook once memorized; it was a re- ment for his sailing classes. e learned to make a flotation de- out of a wet pair of blue jeans; e learned how to stanch the flow od from an amputated limb by a leather belt as a tourniquet; ew to pull the tongue away and ear the throat of obstructions e beginning mouth-to-mouth; ere, alone in the absolute soli- of his pain, he wasn't sure what o except to keep trying to recall e drawing of some kind, one of sketchy but useful diagrams of acute human misery such as a ound fracture, the bone just a f lines protruding out of some inary thigh, two swerves like a so sketch; he sat there and let it d for a moment, hoping the us might drain out. It seemed fe had become a series of such odes, long searching silences as ied to recall some image lost to a faint diagram of a circum- ce and the proper manner in h to solve, to patch, to bandage ounds until further, more pro- onal, help could be obtained.

the weeded suburban outback, ched on the endless steel rail ed in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania,

laid down during the late nineteenth century, and used to move limestone from the quarries along the Hudson, to build the great foundations for the great skyscrapers), he removed his shirt and fingered for the weak spot along the seam where it might give. To get it to tear he had to use his teeth.

He wished for a single clear-cut reason for walking alone half-naked, the pain from his right heel burning up his leg, the makeshift bandage flapping. An explanation: Perhaps the recent catastrophic loss of his wife, Margaret, her car simmering steam and smoke upside down in the wrong lane of the Saw Mill River Parkway, twisted wreckage betrayed by the battered guardrail, the out-moded roadway paved along a trail marked out originally by Indians, the taste of her red hair in his mouth when they last hugged. A soured stock-option deal—his fault. The blame placed on a computer glitch. McKinnen's firm face behind wire rims, fingers prodding his glass desk-top, offering a good package. His wife's departure one morning; her words of explanation shaky in black ballpoint; the name of his betrayer an old friend, Samson, whose hand-shake still lingered in the palm of his golf glove upstairs. Better stories could be told if Margaret had died slowly, a long decline as her white cells submitted, the shiver of her lips as they formed her last words. It wasn't reason enough for his actions. He was certain of that. Their large house stood along the river, excitingly large when they moved in, now just too much house; perhaps all afternoon he'd walked the verandah and looked out at the flat water until, around three, a crew of yard workers arrived, shattering the poetic silence with their blowers and shrieking Weedwackers, driving him up to the third-floor office where, face buried in his palms, he asked for his own salvation—salvation not from grief but from something he couldn't pin down, perhaps just things he hadn't done. Perhaps steps he hadn't taken. Maybe he fully accepted that she was nothing but void now; she was skirts hanging in the closet, the smell of her perfume on the unwashed linen piling up in the laundry room,

recipes torn from magazines piled on her desk in the den.

Again a faint breeze came. He moved forward along the tracks, leaving a pad print of blood behind him on each tie. Ahead of him the tracks curved further into the darkness; to his left and overhead, the steel girders and chutes of the stoneworks.

**T**o the guys who spotted him a quarter mile later he came out of the hazy air like a wounded animal, nothing but a shadow down the tracks moving with a strange hobble that didn't seem human. There were four of them, their own shirts off, nursing a small fire of twigs barely producing flames but lots of whitish smoke slinging in the heavy air. Even in the firelight you could see that they were all four skinny in that deprived way, knotty with muscles and the blue-gray shadows of various tattoos. The one who spotted him had just taken a long draw from a quart bottle of beer and was gasping for breath.

Jesus shit, he spoke softly, wiping back a long black clump of hair from his face.

The fuck's this? another said, parting his legs a bit as if to hold steady against an oncoming force. His jack-boots crunched on the ballast. He pressed his hands flat against each side of his waist. One of the others stationed himself to the side, running his own palms over the smooth-shorn surface of his scalp in a repeated motion half fidget and half habit; each of them tingled and jittered. They could tell right away that whoever was coming, shrouded as he was in the dark, was enfeebled and in some kind of trouble, indeed, for his shirt was off and he was swaybacking from side to side, maybe drunk or tired or both and ready to be taken, to be seduced by their violence or whatever else they felt like dishing up; he was all their night had offered, like a prayer answered, something to break up the tedium of dope smoking and empty chattering and cursing and everything else, and they all knew it, seeing him, and were ready.

The spot where they hung out, just before the tracks carved a dark hole



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in the overflowing cliffside, was strewn with old railroad debris, rails and tie plates and gobs of black tar and broken bottles; it was an outback hovel secluded and safe from everything, as purely wasted and unneeded as they felt themselves to be and, because of that, were; it was a bunch of rubbish and torn-away flesh, it was the self-made tattoos brandished on their own young flesh; and they were young, tight, and eager. What they saw emerge was a man softening into middle age. In his limp was a slight residue of dignity and formality, the way he lifted his feet as if they were still shod and weighted by the expensive shoes; or maybe all of that wasn't noticed until, coming up to them, he opened his mouth and spoke, saying hello softly, the vowels widening, the cup of his mouth over those words like an expensive shell . . . or maybe they didn't notice at all, because they moved around him positing themselves in silence, wordlessly, the guy with the smooth head coming up behind him while the guy with jackboots took one step forward and the others moved in unison to his sides as if he might make some kind of break for it (that was the illusion of tension their stances produced, wanted to produce, were eager to produce).

It was later, in the dreamlike reproductions of those moments, that he realized that the silence in which they worked bespoke everything about their young bodies: muscles limber from stunts, flesh marred and bruised and burned with hard little bull's-eyes from the butts of Dad-held cigarettes; the fuck you's of bodies being twisted into lock holds and half nelsons, pinned with knees in backs and sternums; bucked tendons and double-jointed bone breaks that sucked the air from their fourteen-year-old mouths in the recessed trailer park stuck down in the shithole wastelands near the town's toxic dump. These were the singing, mocking kids that he had feared before on walks in the city. Now he was happy to stumble upon souls rising up out of the darkness next to their pathetic fire. There was behind all this, as they worked in a silence that also bespoke the kick that was to come first from the man in the foreground, only the

dull sound of the insects, a sound prolonged it was blanked from mind and filled in with a new, H form of silence. The kick landed in his stomach. He fell. Slowly and grace the two boys to the side to him and gently helped him feeling his lack of resistance immediately, making note of it by bending back his arms behind him far enough to produce a rainbow of pain over shoulder blades. Their job was the beating with as much dignity as possible, to uphold the ballet of the scene, to make it worth their full while—to produce a stasis in which their friend, with his swatches of clotty black hair swayed now before his bowed head, in work; and he bowed slightly, disappeared in front of this shirtless man, let the little grace period well up between them—then bowing closer until his forehead was right against the stranger's forehead, touching it there damp with sweat while he mouthed to him in the hushed whispers of a confessor, a priest muttering penances, we're going to kick your fucking ass, you know, so you might as well get used to the idea . . . then he spoke his words off and offering up a kick to the groin hard enough to double the man over, the two releasing him on cue, so that he fell to the ground bloodied foot swiping against the dirt. The smooth-headed one removed his wallet from the back pocket, opened it, stooping into the fire, fingering the thick bills he pulled out, flipping the rest of the black leather into the weeds, where it landed, open, spilling into the darkness identification cards, photographs, credit cards, and bank cards that, when he stepped into the automatic teller machine and offered H H M H—his initials and those of his wife—would come out neat piles of bills, as much as anyone could want or need.

Blasted out of the hillside a week ago (during the previously mentioned burst of enthusiastic raining) through a series of explosions that loosened the rock enough to allow men with pickaxes and shovels to labor over the piles, the tunnel was a ragged affair, a gaping hole dripping with spring water and dank sulfur smell; it was a wound



earth and the kind of place the liked to smoke their dope and a sleep summer nights, lying just one another and close to the side in case the occasional light decided to pass through, ringing and creaking. These were beastly trains that spewed a exhausted and slunk along as if med of the decrepit tracks, taking the flat grade along the Hudson at a snail's pace; boxcars were crushed and dented, the seals and lemons of their ownership were faded by weather, scraped clean, layered over—the whole hulking mass came through a few times a day and even if the boys were in a parlor, drinking or hanging out at the end of the tunnel, they could hear it rumbling along the curve near the end of the line.

It was to this tunnel that they dragged the man, yanking him along, his heels jumping over the tracks, his mouth gagged with his own blood. One might wish it otherwise, wish that these boys had decided to release him to the elements, tossed him into the brush, the leaning stalks of bamboo, to rot or crawl his way to safety; but no. The truth is they knew as well as anyone that they were doing; there was a plan in place overall; the stars were aligned in certain ways and all going as planned; if there is a God, and later, if the man was saved, taking on the deep question of experience, he might chalk it up with the guidance of Reverend Simpson) a personal state of *deus absconditus*, abandoned in a sense like Christ on the cross; if there is no God then this piece of blind bad luck began when he abandoned his car and started his trudge with no purpose, and no purpose, into the underside of the road, 9W, a tunnel that usually took him on Friday nights to the city, over the bridge, onto the West Side Highway and out at 72nd Street, to a parking garage of cool poured concrete, the top of his car door, rubber against the wall, sounding particularly sweet going in those confines. At Lincoln Center he could park substrata rise up into the concert halls

without tasting fresh air: that night it was Brahms's Symphony No. 3 with its mysterious second theme, the Andante that fails to reappear in its expected place in the recapitulation; and the third movement, of which he was particularly fond, Poco allegretto, so rounded and soft at the beginning it would, if he had gone, remind him of the shoulders of his wife, of a moment twenty years ago making love in a small room on Nantucket, a fall night, the wintry nor'easter blowing with a nonstop consistency that seemed to smooth the outside world away so that there was only the soft wetness beneath him, and her shoulders; of course, listening from his seat in the third tier to the right with his eyes closed he would, had he gone into the city, have idealized and sentimentalized that first night of lovemaking with the woman who was two years later to take his hand as his beloved wife. The truth of that night was different, of course: awkward kisses, teeth clicking; shame over certain deformities. He did not hear the Brahms and therefore he did not go through that particular memory (and perhaps stepping from his car, locking and closing the door behind him, the firm crunch of his leather soles on the breakdown lane, maybe he knew that he was avoiding this memory; perhaps, or perhaps not). Whatever choice one makes in the matter, God or no God, the boys felt the force of chance was on their side; they had a duty to uphold, knowing as they did that this man they were yanking along still had some small trace of dignity buried in the muffled, flat cries he was making. In movies, eyes in this situation dart around, glint with fear, search the sky for something to lock onto—but his eyes wandered the darkness slowly and without resolve, as if cut loose; at the mouth of the tunnel, feeling the cool cavelike air, he became still.

He would reenter the so-called world in a half-hunch, with his knees bleeding and the sky overhead showing the first hints of morning; all insect life in the brittle weeds having fallen silent, there would be

behind him and down toward the hill only a powdery hum of the conveyor belts drawing stone at the tail end of the night shift. In his pain certain natural opiates would have kicked in, chemicals that sustain the body in times of great trial and allow forced marches of one sort or another—great mass gatherings of the uprooted shuffling up dust that can be seen from jets passing, the ill-fated regions of Rwanda or wherever—those abuses of such extreme measure that we hold them out as testaments of a raw ability to survive physically against extreme odds. Barely standing and barely crawling, he works his way thoughtlessly down toward a crossroads, where eventually, through good fortune and timing, a kind man in an Oldsmobile Cutlass will pull over, hitching up his sagging tan pants and tucking the tail of his white dress shirt (he's the Reverend Simpson of the Alabaster Salvation Church of Haverstraw, on his way to prepare himself for his morning duties), to greet this staggering vagabond. Perhaps because of some motion in the man's gait (again there is a certain control, even in this state of disrepair), perhaps because of the crease of his jeans or just the way his hair, although matted with dirt and dust from the tunnel, still had what clearly was an expensive cut, a layer that took care and time to acquire; whatever it was—perhaps just a goodly sense of duty of some sort, or a moral obligation rooted in his religious beliefs that required Simpson to stop for anyone wandering in tatters, decrepit, with the sunrise welling up over the river and his shoulders and the dew-slick rails and the road dipping down into a hollow of mist—he did stop, calling politely soft excuse-me's to the man, who, upon hearing him, and then seeing him, seemed seized with grief, falling to his knees with his dirty palms out and crying, breaking at that moment from his purely physical plight into something vastly emotional: it was the kind of scene that Simpson felt qualified to handle, holding this lost lamb by the naked shoulders, helping him to regain his feet and work his way by his own power up to the shuddering, ill-



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tuned Olds; in this beast of a car, rending their way along the edge of the river, what one would hope for would be a conversation in which stories were slowly, through numb lips, exchanged—not so much for the good Reverend, who had little to say and needed only to nod kindly, to put his large fat palm on the leg of this shaking man, whose knees were covered with a polyester tartan blanket normally used for roadside picnics with his wife (for the good Reverend was one of the last firm believers in the glories of the roadside picnic, being old enough to remember the days of the early autos, when the reality of the quick conveyance of the Model A was still somehow confused with the daylong adventures of the horse and buggy)—fueled by a lifting of weight and the elation and mercy of the pain the man had traveled through: the death of his wife, financial problems, whatever ill might be construed as the cause for his act, a reason for walking alone down railroad tracks.

**L**ast thoughts don't come easily, last thoughts rising above the shock and pain and the roar of blood to the eardrums and colors splashing behind eyelids, the ping of water dripping off the tunnel wall, the shuffled footfalls of the boys taking their leave, leaving him behind against the wall. The tallest of the four kids leads, yards ahead of the rest. Before going, he'd leaned down with his lips right up to the old fuck's mouth to test for any air and felt nothing, and to rest assured did a drop-kick with the toe of his Doc Martens—steel-reinforced soles of some kind of rubber that was OIL FAT ACID PETROL ALKALI RESISTANT and stood up to the toughest abrasions and work conditions, made in England, birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. His kick made the hard, solid sound of castanets snapping between the fingers of a flamenco dancer as the bones of the man's chin—a dignified sharp chin at that—did a wishbone break. He was leading the bunch, a few yards ahead, because he finished the fuck off and was entitled to his space. All the way up the river mist was

rising out of the tidal waters, here he was reentering the water, shivering and claspings the sides of a sweatshirt before lighting up a cigarette, waiting to let the others catch up. The other guys came out of the tunnel light on their feet, kind of jumbled against one another, bumping and backslapping. As a final touch they'd gone back and laid a body over the tracks—an act, a thought, a coda, a grand finish—would stand out as one of their moves so far because it was certain, that one rattling beast train that always chewed up the bits of silence the night had to wake birds up and down the river, birds that would hawk and chirp suddenly in their sudden intense hubbub that train, an old New York Central engine repainted with Conrail colors would haul a chain of some fifty beleaguered cars; they would be town at the shithole diner tasting weak coffee and eating eggs when the train rounded that bend in the river they'd have their elbows fixed to the Formica tabletop, and the shivering one would be saying, Fuck A, it's a fucking trip, man. I mean fuckin' A, do you hear what I'm hearing, man? while the others would allow themselves a few minutes of silence—not even a nervous mutter—a brooding contentment deep and spiritual, full of weightless of morals, of God or God, as their stars aligned or aligned, depending on how you look at it. The body was found a half mile down the track by the engineer, saw it first in the disk of his head and began the emergency procedure for stopping a thousand tons of steel air breaks and friction breaks applied, turning away so he wouldn't have to see the impact—actually he'd never have seen it any other way, hidden by the front of his locomotive, but turning away out of respect for the about-to-die. The locomotive lodged up under the coupling parts of it at least: divided clevises, the legs stayed back, the tunnel.

**B**y the time the train came was gone, either a skull vacuumed and electrical acti-



as that, or a soul rising up  
gh limestone and shale into  
ilight sky: he was dead. When  
d, shortly after that final kick,  
deep into the shock that pre-  
systems shutting down, the  
was still in New Jersey, heav-  
id bucking along the backside  
wark Airport, close enough to  
nways to give the engineer a  
iew of a TWA flight to L.A.  
g into the night sky, that mo-  
xchange of warning lights go-  
om one wing to another mark-  
ie wingspan of the quivering  
ine. A kinship the engineer  
th all machines was provoked  
n as he watched it, leaning  
craning his neck to see out  
arrow cab windows. A tail of  
ending stars, poured from the  
es, curving off into the violet  
of the refineries and suburbs as  
acks curved away and the train  
path through the wetlands; it  
ter, perhaps in some recollec-  
f that night, the body, another  
en stumblebum finished off by  
in—it was his third such inci-  
in two years—later that he  
also remember the sight of  
plane taking off; not that he  
a connection between the two  
that night, but he felt some-  
hat there was one between the  
and the death of the man  
body had wedged beneath  
was once a cowcatcher and  
was just a square-cut chink of  
frame meant to blunt the im-  
the train did come into con-  
vith anything. Because the  
is this engineer was a good  
who still wedded a romantic  
f trains and what they used to  
—stretching their vast rails  
this great continent—with a  
ular sense of the demands of  
b. He had an ability to take  
ver-increasing frequency of  
s lying across the tracks and  
into a philosophical precept  
s: the world was failing, spin-  
into something bad and evil,  
from what once was firm and  
and, of course, united with  
ind wood and broken stone—  
white right-of-ways, timeta-  
ldom broken. The full weight  
urden of the death lay on the

engineer's shoulders, because he did  
not know that the man had been  
dead for a good twenty-five minutes  
before his engine sliced the body in  
half; of course, he had gone through  
the procedure of stopping the train,  
applying the brakes, radioing to  
Central with the information, using  
his recently installed cellular phone  
to dial up the Haverstraw police,  
and so forth, but none of this allevi-  
ated the *weight of the death*, which  
he carried with him for the next  
several weeks not as a debilitating  
grief or a sense of guilt but just as a  
bad kind of feeling, a bothersome  
notion, that somehow through some  
miracle or grace he might have an-  
ticipated the body in the tunnel,  
known by some small sign—perhaps  
the plane lifting off—that a man  
would be in the tunnel, and there-  
fore saved a life. In the late-after-  
noon light, as he drank his coffee at  
his kitchen table and prepared him-  
self for the shift ahead, he thought  
of the man whose body had had to  
be pried out from under the cab by  
rookie police whose eyes—glassy  
and wide—had betrayed their shock  
at the sight, a torso barely resem-  
bling a human figure. By taking a  
spiritual triangulation from those  
faces, lit by arc emergency lamps  
and flashlight beams, from his perch  
on the beat-up Naugahyde cab seat  
(he refused to come down from  
there, refused to participate in the  
cleaning away of the body), he had  
known and felt the damage his beast  
of a machine had done, leaving a  
smear of blood and guts. And there,  
one morning at the kitchen table, in  
his house down along the river be-  
neath the stone quarry, within walk-  
ing distance of this latest disaster—  
with his wife in the other room  
singing to the baby and outside,  
down a bank of hackweed and bram-  
bles, the Hudson sheet-metal  
calm—there he sat trying hard not  
to hear all that music that was being  
made and had been made by his ma-  
chine and the lives living around  
him, and the Brahms he had never  
heard before but was now somehow  
hearing softly, that Andante finally  
reappearing again but now as a  
solemn chorale. Evening was falling  
softly over the Hudson Valley. Fall

was nearing. The air was cool and  
clear. His child was asleep. His wife  
came out in her jeans and T-shirt  
and kissed his forehead softly, hold-  
ing her lips there, knowing what he  
was thinking about because he had  
been thinking about it for two  
weeks now. The weight of that  
death. But it was time for work, her  
kiss said. Softly, he returned the  
kiss. He put on his jacket, went to  
look one last time at the baby, to  
pass his thumb over her eyelids. He  
walked up the cinder-block steps to  
his truck, feeling the weight lift.  
Evening was falling sweetly between  
the trees. There was the smell of the  
water, earth, sky. A barge rested in  
the river, waiting for stone. Down  
the street kids rode their bikes  
around in circles. It was a good job,  
even if things weren't going the way  
they should in the world. It was a  
good, good job. ■

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## LETTERS

Continued from page 7

### Censorship, Part II

William Gass's exploration of modern American censorship ["Shears of the Censor," April] reminded me of a time when our country's legal system required me to suppress the truth as well. I was asked by my editor to delete part of a nonfiction book manuscript. Although I had written the truth, the truth might have led to a lawsuit. The cost of a legal battle would have bankrupted both the publisher and me. I stood my ground at first but eventually changed the wording, excising a very painful bit of reality. We had no faith that the truth would prevail in our courts. Nowadays the mere possibility of litigation often has the full force of legal, state-sanctioned censorship.

Glenn Cheney  
Hanover, Conn.

William Gass's essay starts out well, with a clear parallel between censorship and clitoridectomy, but soon descends into sweeping elliptical statements about the decline of civilization. The turning point comes when he describes censors "tearing out tongues, stretching necks, stoning women" and in the next paragraph shifts to the evils of "censorship" in our own culture. His examples—claims that the laws of physics were constructed to maintain white-male dominance and that the African people were the "wellspring of creativity and knowledge" from which our culture sprang—are unlikely to incense the reader as much as clitoridectomy and the tearing out of tongues, and their publication cannot rationally be understood as censorship.

Gass states that "in a free society . . . we should be allowed to be boors, if boors we are" and that "playing the fool has always drawn crowds, applause, and remuneration." I hope he was paid well for his efforts.

Patricia O'Donnell  
Farmington, Maine

William Gass's essay reveals that in his former position as a Navy cen-

sor he was called upon to excise passages from enlisted men's personal letters. His narrative led me to wonder whether the hand at *Harper's Magazine* that excises women's contributions in fiction, commentary, and essays will ever hesitate, as Gass's finally did. Although the April issue is somewhat anomalous in failing to include any women writers (save the brief excerpt from "Love Your Looks" [Readings], which quotes a conversation between a woman and her fat), their lack of representation strikes me anew with each issue. Perhaps Gass himself sheds light on the editorial failure to solicit and publish more articles by women when he notes that "a denial of intellectual opportunity and the cancellation of the ordinary citizen's capacities are typical aims of most ruling classes." The dearth of women's voices in *Harper's* undermines the integrity of the entire publication. Yet I continue to read the magazine in the hope that the editors will soon awaken from what Gass describes as a "quiet disregard of reality" and allow women's words to escape the censor's scissors.

Kate Daly  
New York City

### The Theater of Genocide

I am an attorney in the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Alan Zarembo's report on the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda ["Judgment Day," April] includes a footnote that denigrates me, my colleagues, the institution for which we work, and the United States government. The community of international law is small and close-knit, and I therefore consider this footnote damaging to my reputation and harmful to my future as an international criminal lawyer.

The footnote begins by opining that "tribunal workers seem too busy conducting bizarre experiments in cultural relevancy to concern themselves with justice." Our "bizarre experiment" consisted of raising, through a series of performances of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, thousands of dollars for Rwandan orphans. Zarembo quotes a line from our playbill, twisting it out of context:

"when not engaged in theatrical activities, [Gordon] is helping to prosecute war criminals . . ." The context, of course, is a theatrical program. As a group of mostly amateur actors, each of us tried to write something about our connection to the theater in general or to the play in particular. Having had no previous theatrical experience, I included, strictly in a spirit of humor, the above-cited quip. Shorn of context, Zarembo's quotation suggests that I am a full-time thespian living off the tribunal dole. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am currently deputy team leader and legal officer on the Propaganda Team (We prosecute irresponsible journalists, among others.) I work late at night and most weekends. During the play, I would typically work from eight or nine in the morning until six or seven at night. Then I would be in rehearsals until as late as twelve or one in the morning. I missed not a single day of work during play preparation and performance. It was a grueling schedule but we were doing it to help children who lost their families in the genocide. Zarembo's suggestion that the United States Information Agency wasted money on the production is also unwarranted. For little more than the price of a theater consultant's airplane ticket and help with the advertising, the USIA provided access to art and entertainment in a country still psychologically devastated by the war.

The footnote also repeats the same tired refrain that the tribunal is mismanaged and too slow to bring justice. Had Zarembo taken the time to dig a bit deeper, he would have found a dedicated cadre of employees toiling in difficult conditions to keep this operation running. Such rudimentary necessities as cars, computers, photocopying machines, and paper are frequently unavailable, and we often buy equipment out of our own pockets. In spite of these conditions, we have made remarkable progress. It is important to remember that the tribunal has a narrow mandate: prosecution of the high-level genocide planners. Of this select group, fourteen indictments have



sued and thirteen individuals ready in custody. Three trials begun and more are scheduled coming months. can handle the lack of recognition and credit for these results, but all we have been through we brook unwarranted criticism. of degrading us, help us. Let all know that we are toiling in, against the odds, and that we help. Tell the world to send us people, more equipment, and some good wishes.

y S. Gordon  
Rwanda

a Zarembo's portrayal of the path of Rwanda's genocide is a cruel reminder that the full extent of the human wreckage caused by the 1994 ethnic war may never be fully known. Yet this chilling fact is only part of the story. Perhaps even more disturbing and threatening to any lasting restoration of civil society, Rwanda's prisons house not only men, but also thousands of women and children. Permeated throughout the nation in prison facilities are children of all ages, even infants. It is not unusual to see toddlers there. They live in the same overcrowded, deplorable conditions as their mothers have been incarcerated for war crimes and they languish with little health care, or schooling. Thus the price for the crimes of adults with no future. Many children, especially the youngest ones, are completely innocent of any involvement in the massacres. Sadly, some children participate in the genocide. Like soldiers in other wars around the world they fought and killed without understanding why. Now they await possible execution. The terrible wounds to the soul of the nation are ever to be healed, but first provide Rwanda's children with a hopeful future. Other wars in the world have taught us that to ignore the plight of children of war is to set the prologue to yet another chapter in a saga of violence.

F. MacCormack  
Sant, Save the Children  
Hartford, Conn.

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## "Land for Peace"

### Can it solve the problems of the Middle East?

There has been much emphasis for years on the "land for peace" formula to solve the long-simmering problems of the Middle East. Translating this slogan into plain English means that Israel should surrender Judea-Samaria (the "West Bank"), Gaza and the Golan to the Arabs. They would establish a Palestinian state. Once that happened, it is thought that peace and tranquility would soon come to the troubled Middle East.

### What are the facts?

■ The concept of "land for peace" is a totally new one in the history of the world. It was formulated for one purpose only, namely to pressure Israel to give up territories that it has administered since the Six-Day War of 1967. By its victory in that war, Israel wound up in possession of these territories. Contrary to what many are led to believe, the "West Bank", the focus of today's attention, had never been part of any Arab country. It was part of Palestine, a territorial unit that, by the Mandate of the League of Nations and in line with the Balfour Declaration, had been designated as a national home for the Jewish people.

■ Thus, while the concept of "land for peace" is a brand-new one, the concept that to the victor belong the spoils is as old as history itself and had really never been questioned before. Our own country, of course, following its Manifest Destiny, has benefited greatly and has consolidated its territory by applying this motto. But Israel followed a different path. From the day of victory in 1967, it waited for an offer of peace from the Arabs. But that offer never came. Instead, following the war, The Arabs pronounced their three unalterable "nos": no recognition, no negotiation, and no peace with Israel.

■ In 1977, President Sadat of Egypt traveled to Jerusalem and presented a peace plan. The Israelis eagerly embraced his suggestion. In exchange for peace and normalization of relations, Israel returned to Egypt the vast Sinai peninsula, together with the city of Yamit; some of the most advanced military installations in the world; the port and naval installations of Sharm-el-

Sheik, which safeguards Israel's access to its port of Eilat; and the oil fields Israel had developed and which had made Israel self-sufficient in its energy requirements. And, of course, Israel also gave up the natural buffer against aggression that the Suez Canal and the strategic depth of the Sinai itself provided. It was a first in history. Never before in the chronicle of mankind had the victor returned conquered territory to the vanquished in order to attain peace.

■ One would expect that the concept of "land for peace" would work both ways. After all, should not the Arabs also make some territorial sacrifices for peace? Unfortunately, that is not the case. Every inch of land held by the Arabs is considered "holy Arab soil" and its possession by the "infidels" is inadmissible, intolerable, a blasphemy and a case for "jihad" (holy war). No compromise, no concession is ever possible. Sale of land to Jews is punishable by death. As far as the Arabs are concerned the "land for peace" principle is basically a one-way street.

■ The "land for peace" formulation is now mostly applied to Judea-Samaria (the "West Bank"), Gaza and the Golan Heights. Israel's foes, but also some of its friends, urge Israel to yield these regions to the Arabs in exchange for "peace." But there is no peace, and no peace will come about by Israel's giving up these areas of vital strategic importance to those who are its sworn enemies and who have declared over and over again that they wish to use this land as their launching pad for the final attempt at the destruction of Israel. The conflict in the area is not only between Israel and the "Palestinians." It is first of all between Israel and the hostile Arab nations. With the exception of Egypt, and now also of Jordan, virtually all of them are still in a state of war with Israel.

To none of the Arab countries has it ever occurred that they might trade land for peace—as, for instance, yielding the "West Bank", Gaza or the Golan to Israel for the sake of peace and tranquility. Egypt certainly made no territorial or other concessions for the sake of peace and neither did Jordan. Both countries drove very hard bargains to which the Israelis, in their unending quest for peace, acceded. There is never any accommodation on the part of the Arabs, never even a gesture of tentative friendship. For the victor to yield land for peace to the vanquished is a new idea—who knows, it might even be a good one. But it surely would have to work both ways in order to be valid and effective.

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## Freeing Verse

In "Poetry: Our Worst Kept Secret" [Readings, April], Richard Howard calls the position of poetry today "wretched . . . absurd . . . unread . . . despised," and appoints himself to restore "an art that was once the glory and the consolation of our race." He believes the public enjoyment of poetry to be "the worst thing to have happened to poetry since the advent of the camera and the internal combustion engine." No, poetry is threatened by neither technology nor the highbrow elitism with which he intends to wrest it from the ghettos. Howard says that poetry, like Scripture, "is addressed not to everyone . . . but to the individual." But can't our appreciation of poetry, like that of Scripture, be shared? Am I allowed to appreciate Auden only in a closed, candlelit room? Must I hide in smoky, underground hovels to discuss Yeats? Or can we all celebrate poetry during National Poetry Month? Howard need not worry: I will continue to read poetry in May and beyond, as will the rest of America.

*Peter Krause*  
New York City

Everyone knows that federal declarations such as National Poetry Month are inherently meaningless, but Richard Howard's remarks simply compound the absurdity. And while I usually avoid the word "elitist"—which conservatives use these days to describe anyone who's been within fifty yards of a cultural event—Howard's remarks on National Poetry Month make any other label inappropriate.

Which suite on the literary *Titanic* has Howard booked into? Certainly it's one that shields his eyes from the deplorable state of literacy in contemporary America, where college students routinely balk at doing required readings in humanities classes because they don't see how such fluff will help them compete in the global marketplace. How can anyone knowing the importance of literature to cultural well-being deplore an effort to raise awareness of the literary arts among

the populace? If all my information came from television, I would have no idea that American literature exists at all—with the possible exception of the bestsellers that get remade as TV movies.

Howard thinks that poetry should be kept secret. Isn't it already?

*Led Pelton*  
Sheboygan, Wisc.

## Clean Getaway

The February Harper's Index stated that although NAFTA requires the United States to spend over one billion dollars for environmental cleanup, it had spent nothing by the end of 1996. As general manager for the water department of one of the Mexican border cities with the United States, I can attest that the mutual promises made by our two governments have not yet been kept.

The North American Development Bank (NADBANK) was set up for the express purpose of funding cleanup projects, and to date it may be the only two-year-old bank without a single client. There was also a special binational agency, the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), created to certify "environmental projects." The executives for the agency enjoy diplomatic status and have an entire penthouse as headquarters in Ciudad Juárez. So far they have done nothing to justify their salaries.

Our city, San Luis Río Colorado, in the Mexican state of Sonora, with an estimated population of 160,000, has serious environmental problems. Our drainage system serves only 38 percent of the population, and our sewage, for which we have no treatment plant, is seriously contaminating the dry bed of the Colorado River. After more than a year of presenting projects to the BECC and the NADBANK we have yet to receive any help. It is our hope that the American media will continue to expose our governments' failure to meet their commitments.

*Guillermo Perez Diaz*  
San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora  
Mexico

## War Zones

I was severely discomposd by Terence Wrong's philippic [Letter April] against Scott Anderson's memoir ["Prisoner of War," Folio, January]. Anderson was stalking the murderous streets of Beirut, seeking news and insights on the terrible conflict. Wrong was a self-admitted hotel warrior. Need anything more be said?

*Joseph C. Spear*  
Washington, D.C.

It's a small point, but I cannot understand Terence Wrong's contempt for freelancers who bum rides from TV crews or why Scott Anderson bothered denying it. When I was a freelancer I bummed rides without compunction from staffers whose car fares and car rentals were covered by expense accounts; now that I'm a staffer, I offer rides to freelance who I know are going my way.

A larger point is Wrong's scornful reference to freelancers as "lone with nobody funding them." I think someone willing to gamble his own resources for a story deserves at least as much credit as someone who's doing it with advance funding. I hope Wrong gets to try freelancing someday. He'll find it educational.

*Ivan Berger*  
Fanwood, N.J.

## Neuralgia

I assume from Melvin Sabshin's response [Letters, May] to L. Davis's satirical exposé of the DSM-IV ["The Encyclopedia of Insanity," February] that the article touched a very painful nerve. Sabshin believes that the many years spent toiling at the manual proves its worth. Unfortunately, if the very premise on which the research is based is fundamentally false, no amount of hard work will prove its worth.

Other researchers' hard work has suggested that so-called mental illness is iatrogenic—i.e., caused or exacerbated by the supposed treatment. And it is not only the treatment but the very diagnosis itself that creates the "disease."

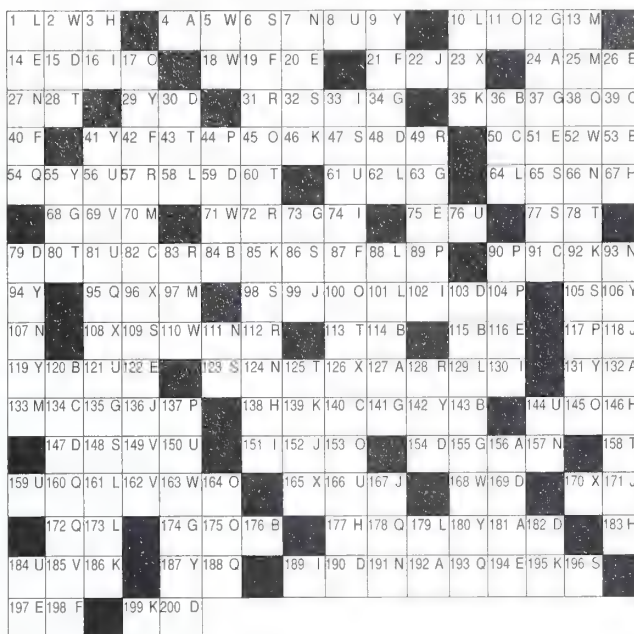
*Lawrence Feuchtwanger*  
Vancouver, B.C., Canada



# DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 175

By Thomas H. Middleton

The diagram, when filled in, will contain a quotation from a published work. The numbered squares in the diagram correspond to the numbered blanks under the WORDS. The WORDS form an acrostic: the first letter of each spells the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken. The letter in the upper right-hand corner of each square indicates the WORD containing the letter to be entered in that square. Contest rules and the solution to last month's puzzle appear on page 75.



CLUES	WORDS
A. Pleasant, gentle, benign	192 4 24 127 156 181 132
B. Birth	176 84 115 53 120 36 114 143
C. Am. admiral (1885-1966); WWII commander, Pacific Fleet	39 50 140 134 82 91
D. What you must keep for success (4 wds. after "your")	103 182 15 30 48 169 147 200 154 79 59 190
E. Bridle path in Hyde Park (2 wds.)	122 116 20 197 194 51 26 75 14
F. Member of a people of Malay stock, northern Luzon, Philippines	87 40 19 42 198 21
G. Greenery, e.g.	37 34 73 12 68 155 63 141 174 135
H. Application, striving	3 177 138 67 146 183
I. Unstable, feeble with age	16 102 189 33 74 151 130
J. Enclose in a casing or covering	171 152 136 99 167 22 118
K. Chicken fat	195 85 46 199 139 35 186 92
L. Enduring fame	64 161 179 88 101 10 58 129 62 1 173
M. Exalt to a divine extent	97 70 25 133 13

N. Difference	107 7 111 191 124 27 93 66 157
O. Differently	145 45 11 17 100 175 38 164 153
P. Okay, satisfactory (2 wds.)	89 90 104 117 44 137
Q. Metal urn with a spigot, used for tea	188 178 172 160 54 95 193
R. Offense, resentment	57 31 128 83 72 49 112
S. 1940 Ethel Merman musical (2 wds.)	123 148 65 32 6 105 98 77 86 196 47 109
T. <i>Peter</i> ____; 1891 George du Maurier novel	113 158 80 43 28 60 125 78
U. "When we have ____ this mortal coil" (2 wds., <i>Hamlet</i> )	81 184 166 150 76 8 121 56 159 61 144
V. Jacob's first wife (Gen. 29: 23-26)	149 162 185 69
W. Daddy-longlegs, e.g.	5 163 112 71 2 18 165 52
X. Chew gently	96 173 176 165 18 23
Y. Questionable-ness	131 94 106 55 119 41 180 142 187 29 9

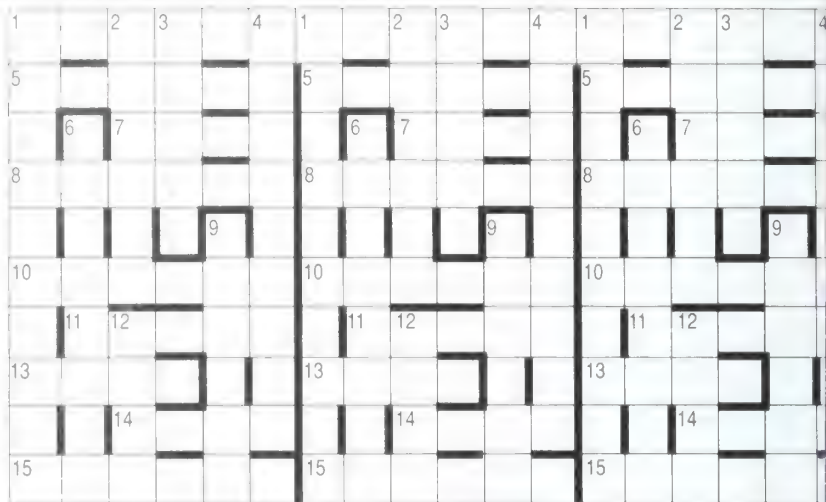


# PUZZLE

## Sports Page

By Richard F. Matthey Jr.

**I**f you are a 1 Across (6,6,6), this puzzle is for you. Each sports "item" is really three clues, written consecutively, leading to three answers, which are to be entered either in the left, center, or right section of the diagram, the order of the sections being determined by the banner headline at 1 Across. Within each "item," the clues may be in any order; they never overlap, and there are never any unnecessary words bridging them. One answer at 14 Across is a variant spelling; there are no proper names. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 75.



1 Across

5. It's something of an undertaking seeing him subjectively rear to pose again like a body-builder with unconscious energy. Half being eliminated right out in front, the first three characters go off stage, then go back on it. (6,6,6)
7. Gamblers' love removed roulette space to secure back room funny business—they're bound to eliminate talk. (4,4,4)
8. "Hitting from both sides, wasted time entering ring..." Article about boxing lives name what someone who is up is to do in going back, getting beat again. (6,6,6)
10. Commands given to two basketball teams for speed mean one scoring leader is taking notice, with team starter comparatively sanguine—like the Vice President, only more so. (6,6,6)
11. Met low-down player. He's hooked. Nothing signed but in with one sneaker perhaps—initially, Adidas. Being upfront, it's mostly vague, confused. I may be in claim. (8,8,8)
13. To lay, advancing, low—something wicked setting strike. Pin, in dropping, held beginning of round by one point. (4,4,4)
14. Watered down from swimming lap, first of entrants contended with dive marked last of the world—every second place participant eliminated out. (4,4,4)

15. Tee off, take putting directions up front. With south winds heating links, throw arm throughout contest. Rest is unwise. (6,6,6)

15 Across

1. Major League athlete's propositions added arm and leg to hitch with Southern team. It's painful to finger a rat, luring misfits like Tinker to Evers to Chance to Tinker! (10,10,10)
2. California football player, some tackle, necessity for making certain shots, stirred up fire, but primarily provided that less than... less than certain California baseball players, playing angles. (6,6,6)
3. People in classes having a run-in certainly wear both ends of épée's fencing shaft pointing at the head only, then—slap! slam!—a bit of blood. (5,5,5)
4. Holy One takes it. Club area rang with cheers. Jockey underdoes speed behind former ace in clear. (9,9,9)
6. Root for track, then catch game covered by amateur athletic contract—by the sound of it, to set right a big scandal in archery! That sounds appropriate. (8,8,8)
9. Eastern Division hockey team was upset by second class pass, after face off, dropping below Little League status to tear back by mid-week. (6,6,6)
12. Player who makes good copy in papers ("Big Star!") is a lox, non-starter in track events for the people at home. (4,4,4)

**Contest Rules:** Send your solution to the puzzle to the Editor, *Harper's Magazine*, 606 Broadway, New York, NY 10011. It must be received by the Editor no later than the 15th of the month following the month in which the puzzle appears. Entries must be received by July 5. Senders of the most interesting solution will receive a complimentary subscription to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the September issue. A prize of \$100 will be given to the first person to solve the puzzle. Send your solution to the Editor, *Harper's Magazine*, 606 Broadway, New York, NY 10011.





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*A number of steps were taken to protect the grizzlies and their habitat: leaving the area to the bears in the spring by working only in the winter; exploring at an elevation far below grizzly dens; restricting human access; prohibiting off-road driving; installing a less obtrusive drill pad and revegetating the area.*



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# HARPER'S

M A G A Z I N E

FOUNDED IN 1850 / VOL. 295, NO. 1767  
AUGUST 1997

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# HARPER'S

CECILIA JEFFERY, JOHN LOWELL

LARI SHORRIS, STELLA STELLA

## Deep Blue Thoughts

In regard to your discussion concerning consciousness, computers, and chess—"Our Machines, Our selves" [Forum, May]—there would be no significant interest in Deep Blue's victory over humankind in chess were it not for the extremely deep-seated ambivalence with which we view the question of our essence: What are we? We desire a freedom from physical constraints so that we may realize our essence, and yet we fear this freedom and the tools we design to help us achieve it. Paradoxically, those tools now threaten to overwhelm us.

The early modern idea that technology will lift from humankind the burdens of drudgery, allowing us to "become our essence"—to spend our time pondering lofty questions, thus reenacting the popularized Greek ideal of leisure—has in postmodernity reversed itself so completely that the conceit of freedom of thought no longer appears supportable. In other words, to the observant, it appears that "drudgery" is our essence. The lofty questions now belong in the province of technical research, and solutions are no doubt forthcoming. We are told that the lot of humanity is to function as a variable in the equation of market forces, that we are equivalent to our recombinant DNA, and so forth. Technology tells us who and what we are, and we

function accordingly. To the extent, we have abdicated the question of consciousness and pawned the hardest questions to the new era of computer science and systems analysis. We have made the assertion that the answer to the question "What are we?" lies within the realm of neurons and binary code.

Connex Fedrowe  
Allston, Mass.

"Our Machines, Ourselves" is an embarrassing race to see who can spit out the most clichés, was innocuous in its half-baked generalizations about consciousness, computers, and the chess match between Garry Kasparov and Deep Blue. A few points do deserve rebuttal, however. First, James Bailey referred to chess as a "very small data set" and goes on to imply that perhaps it would be more interesting if the data changed often. What makes people so uninteresting is that they criticize things about which they know little. Chess is awesomely complex (there are 180 octillion possible variations in the first ten moves, this makes no mention of the relocation of the pieces) and engaging to anyone with patience. Perhaps one reason why "people aren't dying for the lack of good play" is that most don't resist the consumerist influences of our contemporary society—influences that were strangely unmentioned by the panel when the sources of our dissatisfaction were contemplated.

Kenneth Bouley  
San Francisco

Harper's Magazine welcomes reader response. Please address correspondence to Letters Editor. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to editing. Volume 106 includes individual author acknowledgment.



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According to forum participant Charles Siebert, "The more we un-shoulder [physical work] to our machinery, the more we become our essence." It seems that the participants' consensus is that our common feelings of alienation and anxiety are misguided. They all seem to agree that the negative effects of advancing technology are in our heads. If we would only realize, they imply, that computers can never become human, our fears would simply disappear. But clearly this is not the case.

Technological advances have increased, rather than decreased, the amount of time we spend doing housework. Faster airplanes don't mean that the businessperson has time to relax once she reaches her destination. Rather, she is simply expected to arrive sooner. And portable computers demand that she do work on the plane as well. The increasing speed of technology does mean that our lives speed up. And, contrary to Siebert's assertion, we walk faster too.

Chris Ryan  
Boulder, Colo.

We know that a group of very clever people have analyzed the mechanics of chess so completely that they have written a computer program that might have a better inventory of the game's strategies and possibilities than the greatest of all human players. My question is not whether a computer can master the mechanics of chess, but whether it can enjoy the game. I am sure that the programmers could develop a huge database of possible human responses that would make it seem very human indeed, but this would not convince me that the machine was anything but a machine.

Mechanically speaking, just about any machine is superior to a human, which is precisely why we make them. Machines go fast, lift enormous weights, organize vast amounts of data, and perform endlessly repetitive calculations—but they don't live. A task that might better differentiate between computer and human would be the performance of a symphony. Mahler's Fifth, perhaps. I wonder

whether a computer can experience that symphony. Is it possible to write a computer's program to go beyond the mechanics of reproducing the notes of the fourth movement and draw out the heart-wrenchingly slow resolution of the final chord, all because it is so deeply moved?

Rick Neale  
Atlanta

As I write this letter, the match between world champion Garry Kasparov and the computer Deep Blue is still in progress, but the existential concerns about the outcome are entirely unfounded. Even if Deep Blue does win, its victory would not represent the subjugation of man by machine. It will instead represent the victory of the combined effort of the thousands of scientists, programmers, and engineers who created the machine and its program over the singular effort of one man, Garry Kasparov.

The issue, I admit, would be at least a little more ambiguous if Deep Blue were not a machine at all. I say, some sort of chess-playing sheep dreamed up in a Scottish genetics laboratory.

John A. Washington V  
Malibu, Calif.

### The Roots of Blackness

I was both dismayed and offended by Jim Sleeper's essay "Toward the End of Blackness" [May], which informs us that race is a social construction, an idea that is not exactly new to black people in the United States. We happen to know that we are not stupid, that we are not inferior, and that we are not bent toward criminality. We know that we can succeed if we are given the opportunity, because, as Sleeper rightly comments, the success of the "American experiment" is founded on the presence and participation of African Americans. Sleeper is absolutely right when he says that we black Americans are not as American as you can get. Unfortunately, he perpetuates the racial myth that created "blackness" in the first place. It's not blackness that's the problem, but "whiteness."



his writings on race and identities Baldwin reiterated time and that to be "white" in America essentially, to be "not-black." With the "wigger" fad among some of America's disaffected white youths, who wear "colors" and baggy pants fall off their hips, and speak they perceive to be black English, and the wigger phenomenon is new; generations of rebellious American youths have aspired to the image of blackness that would make their white elders' unwillingness to recognize and the difference is the source of the American problem with race. And the problem rooted in mainstream America, not in black America.

Wright  
n, Mich.

Sleeper's essay on blackness is an amazing example of white writers' penchant for criticizing African-American behavior. It not only violates one of the unwritten but well-known rules of ethnic etiquette: members of one ethnic community should not comment publicly on what might be the "organic patterns" of behavior found within another ethnic community. Commentators such as Sleeper justify their effrontery to us by arguing that the black intelligentsia should just quiet down and defer to a newly emerging "coldness." This is simply another attempt to silence black dissent. Sleeper also expends considerable energy on a critique of Alex Haley's bestseller, *Roots*. Well, *Roots* has so damn much attention in the public place. Even though other ethnic groups' quasi-mythical stories have been similarly hyped and commercialized, Sleeper's shallow understanding of the political and cultural tensions among black Americans leads him to the bizarre conclusion that *Roots* was actually the canonical text for black Americans that the white world claimed it to be. His thimbleful of knowledge of black history leads him to believe that although black folks have been on American soil since the seventeenth century, they waited until the appearance

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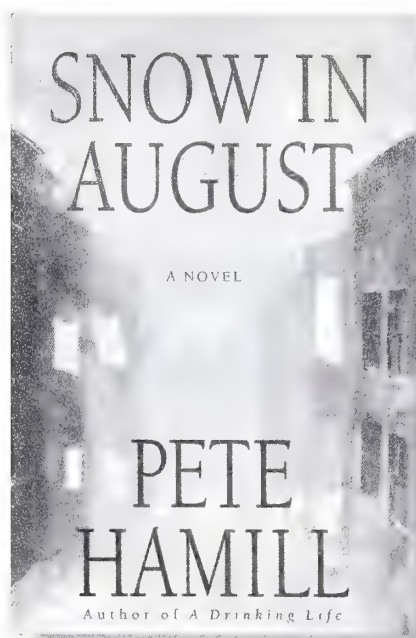
—Frank McCourt,  
author of *Angela's Ashes*

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—Robert Lipsyte,  
*The New York Times*  
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of Haley's book before they could proclaim a viable understanding of their tragic history.

Sleeper and other conservatives who trash African-American reality blithely ignore the rich world of black meanings found in traditional African-American music and in the oral tales and spirituals that have been handed down from our ancestors. These deep cultural sources are the true context of black American experience and represent a massive historical counterweight to the central falsehood of Sleeper's article.

Martin Kilson  
Committee on African Studies  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, Mass.

Jim Sleeper's essay is itself an ambiguous example of his thesis that black people are an integral part of the great experiment that is America. Sleeper, a non-black writing for a non-black audience, and I, a black man, are participants in his literary experiment. But I am the specimen in the petri dish, and my participation is not at the same level as that of Sleeper and his audience. Thus the writer-reader relationship excludes me, trapping me in my petri dish. I, the specimen, am helpless, as the writer pretends to capture the sentiments of my people, whose heart he does not know. He is unable to convey what my second-class American citizenship means to me; nor does he understand my need to feel connected to the elsewhere-land of my racial heritage, even if that connection is as mythical as a St. Patrick's Day parade.

Sleeper tells a story about blackness that is not true, a story that will not change the day-to-day reactions of my purported compatriots to my attempts to live my own African-American dream. Sleeper has not discovered a hidden secret to race relations in the United States. He has propagated an old lie in a clever new disguise.

D. Joseph Whitten  
New York City

## Prison I: Minimum Security

Thank you for printing my sister Amanda Coyne's article, "The Long Good-bye: Mother's Day in Federal Prison" [May]. It was beautifully written, and although some of us at Pekin Federal Prison Camp (the facility she visited) may quibble with a point or two, we all really appreciate the attention. The thing my sister's article only implies, but that we would like to emphasize, is that most of us just don't belong here. Federal prisons across the country are packed with women serving five-, ten-, even twenty-year sentences who would not even have been indicted twenty years ago.

Since the 1980s the government has been applying federal conspiracy laws to drug cases. The prosecution, in effect, no longer needs evidence that we committed a crime—only that we were around when somebody else did. For many of us, our only crime consisted of hopping into the wrong car or picking up the wrong phone. Of course, a lot of us fell in love with the wrong guy, but that's another story.

So here we sit in the penitentiary visiting room on Mother's Day—this year, and the next—watching as our children get older and older and older.

Jennifer Krehbiel  
Pekin, Ill.

## Prison II: Maximum Security

*Editor's Note: Harper's Magazine received a copy of the following letter, which was sent to a prisoner in the Federal Prison Camp in Pensacola, Florida. The magazine has filed an administrative appeal of this rejection with the federal Bureau of Prisons.*

TO: Robert Armstrong  
FROM: Dennis W. Hasty, Warden  
SUBJECT: Harper's Magazine, April

The above named publication/material from Harper's Magazine has been rejected in accordance with the Bureau's Program Statement on Incoming Publications (PS 5266.07), which provides in part:

"The Warden may reject a publication if it is determined detrimental

to the security, good order, or discipline of the institution or if it facilitate criminal activity."

The above named publication has been rejected because the content of this mail includes an article titled, "Opium Made Easy," which on page 48, has an illustration on to make poppy tea.

A copy of this notification has been sent to the publisher/sender who may obtain an independent view of this rejection.

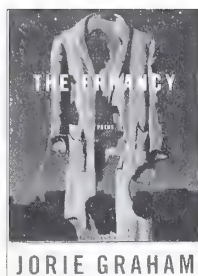
## Clarification and Apology

The Readings section of the 1997 issue of Harper's Magazine contained an excerpt entitled "Life of a Guinea Pig," taken from an article, "Research Unit Rejection Cards," that was first published in the August 1996 issue of Guinea Zero: A Journal for Human Pharmaceutical Research Subjects. The excerpt in Harper's Magazine should not be understood as suggesting Allegheny-Medical College of Pennsylvania gave its test subjects screening forms only for the screening process and not for the research experiment itself. Since publication Harper's Magazine has learned Allegheny-MCP gives a core form to its test subjects for the screening process and that, after successful screening, and after a subject is selected for the research protocol, additional and separate consent is obtained for the research. A copy of this signed form is provided to the subject.

Since publication, Allegheny-MCP has said that it is unaware of any instances of "sloppy injections" and that all the phlebotomists at the facility are either certified venipuncture or highly experienced, trained nurses. When a change of date of a study does sometimes occur, it is the policy of Allegheny-MCP to provide notification to the subject of any delays as soon as possible and, if warranted, to provide additional compensation. The opinions expressed in the excerpt are that of the author, not Harper's Magazine. We apologize for any misunderstanding the excerpt may have caused.



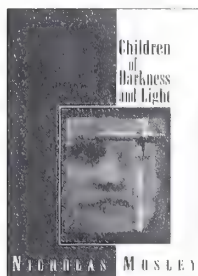
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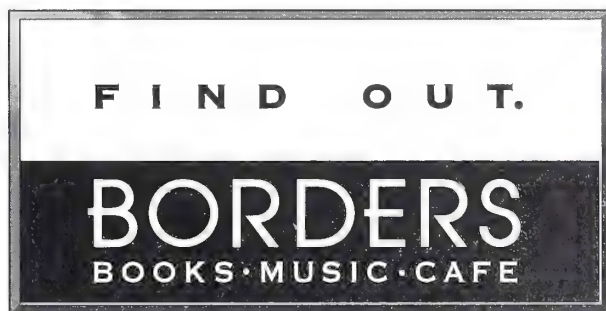
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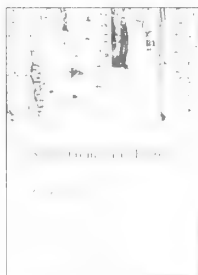
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# HARPER'S INDEX

- Number of months since Congress imposed a moratorium on hearing new ethics complaints against members : 6
- Number of times the moratorium has been extended since its introduction last February : 7
- Ratio of times a member of Congress was accused of being a "liar" in the 104th session to the times a foreigner was : 4:1
- Average ratio in the three previous terms : 1:2
- Percentage of Americans earning less than \$25,000 a year who believe the President propositioned Paula Jones : 29
- Percentage of Americans earning at least \$50,000 a year who believe this : 48
- Factor by which a circumcised heterosexual man is more likely to receive oral sex than an uncircumcised one : 1.33
- Number of U.S. generals prosecuted for adultery since 1951 : 0
- Number of U.S. military personnel convicted of adultery in the last year : 124
- Estimated percentage change since 1996 in the number of Air Force pilots who have voluntarily left the service : +40
- Number of soldiers and veterans who testified last June that Timothy McVeigh was a model soldier : 11
- Estimated number of former Nazi SS officers or their dependents receiving a pension from the German government : 65,000
- Number of them who live in the U.S. : 3,377
- Ratio of U.S. spending on defense last year to Japanese spending on infrastructure : 2:5
- Highest bid offered at auction last May for the Watergate Hotel lock picked in 1972 to get into DNC offices : \$13,000
- Bid the seller expected : \$25,000
- Percentage of Americans who believe Richard Nixon did nothing "worse than what other presidents have done" : 70
- Estimated number of "objectionable" Web pages to which Microsystems' Cyber Patrol program blocks access : 3,000,000
- Portion of CIA documents to be declassified in 2000 for which the agency has requested exemption : 2/3
- Percentage of CIA documents regarding Iran's 1953 coup that the agency has destroyed : 95
- Chances that an officer in Iran's rebel National Liberation Army is a woman : 7 in 10
- Number of children that two French government officials have had together out of wedlock : 4
- Number of contestants in France's 17th Annual Pig Squealing Contest, held last August : 12
- Estimated number of black bears in New Hampshire in 1900 : 50
- Estimated number there today : 2,500
- Number of North America's six sea turtle species that are not on the endangered list : 1
- First edition of *Joy of Cooking* not to include a recipe for a soup made from endangered turtles : 1997
- Letters of complaint elicited by a *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* episode in which she supports evolution : 80
- Letters of complaint the show received about an episode in which her son goes camping with Walt Whitman : 94
- Number of actors who auditioned last winter to be the new Captain Kangaroo : 1,000
- Change in the number of Americans able to receive C-Span since Congress altered cable laws in 1992 : -3,500,000
- Estimated number of days each year during which no major-league sports event takes place in the U.S. : 5
- Percentage of Americans who say they've never heard of Marv Albert : 46
- Points by which Frank Gifford's approval rating exceeds that of Newt Gingrich : 8
- Price California's Fidelity Information Recovery service charges to send an "operative" to test a mate's faithfulness : \$350
- Price of a charcoal-lined, U.S. military-surplus body bag from the *Sportsman's Guide* catalogue : \$12.88
- Number of consumer products O. J. Simpson plans to market under his six trademarks : 463
- Number of films to be released by the end of the year in which Larry King plays himself : 8
- Ratio of *The Lost World* to *Jurassic Park* in the amount of screen time devoted to dinosaurs eating people : 7:1

Figures cited have been adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of June 1997. Sources are listed on page 59.

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# READINGS

[Encounter]

## MADE IN AMERICA: A LETHAL WEAPON'S RETURN POLICY

*Adapted from "Is This Some Kind of Crusade?" by Robert Fisk, in the May 18 issue of The Sunday Review, the magazine of the London Independent.*

All morning the Israelis had shelled the villages of southern Lebanon. The sky was alive with the sound of supersonic F-16 fighter bombers, while Apache helicopters hovered like wasps over the villages. Israel's Voice of the South radio had ordered residents to abandon their homes; if they fled, the radio promised, they would not be hurt.

Four days earlier, a fourteen-year-old Lebanese boy had been killed by a booby-trap bomb; the pro-Iranian Hezbollah militia, accusing Israel of responsibility, fired Katyusha rockets across the border, wounding several Israelis; in response, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres—vainly seeking reelection by portraying himself as a soldier-statesman—ordered the mass bombardment of southern Lebanon from the air, sea, and land.

The United States meekly called for both sides to "exercise restraint" but publicly sympathized with Israel. Although Washington was officially neutral, the Lebanese found it difficult to dissociate their latest war from the United States. The Voice of the South ordering them

to flee their homes was partly funded by right-wing American evangelists. The 155 mm artillery shells hissing over their villages were made in America. So were the F-16 jets and the Apache helicopters. Even the name chosen by Peres for the invasion—"Operation Grapes of Wrath"—seemed distinctly American. (If it did not come from the Book of Deuteronomy, it may have taken its inspiration from the novel by John Steinbeck, who once described Arabs as "the dirtiest people in the world and among the smelliest.")

In the Lebanese village of Mansouri that morning of April 13 last year, Abbas Jiha, a farmer who volunteered as an ambulance driver for the town, packed his family and several residents into the ambulance and fled the falling shells. He crammed thirteen terrified passengers into the vehicle. Abbas Jiha says that just as he was putting his children into the back of the ambulance, he saw two helicopters. "They were low, and the pilots seemed to be watching us."

Abbas remembers that by the time he left Mansouri, part of the village was on fire, the smoke curling over the fields. "We left in a convoy of tractors and cars and headed for Amriyeh, where there was a U.N. post with Fijian soldiers on the main coast road to Tyre."

It was then, as the ambulance was approaching U.N. Checkpoint 1-23, that Abbas Jiha heard the women in the back of the ambulance shouting at him. "One of them was crying out to me, 'The helicopter is coming close to us—it's chasing us.' I looked out of the window and I could see the Apache getting closer. I told them all: 'Don't be afraid. Just say "Allahu Ak-



ba" ("God is great"). "I had told them not to be afraid, but I was very frightened."

A videotape by a Reuters camerawoman at the scene shows what happened next. Milliseconds after the ambulance cleared U.N. Checkpoint 1-23, a missile exploded through the back door, engulfing the vehicle in fire and smoke and hurling it some fifty feet through the air and into the living room of a house.

[Query]

## FORBES'S \$64 BILLION QUESTIONS

*From an internal memo sent in April to reporters at Forbes magazine who were working on the magazine's annual list of the "world's richest people." The list was to appear in the July 28 issue of Forbes.*

**T**ake a look at the questions below and see if you can slip some or all of them into the interviews you do. If you can't get the billionaire to talk to you, look for good details in other conversations you have or articles you read that might flesh out the guy's personality.

### Questions:

What are the most overrated and underrated aspects of being a billionaire?

What does being a billionaire mean to you from an intellectual standpoint? How about from an emotional standpoint?

What is the best piece of advice you ever bestowed, upon whom, and what was the result?

What else is there for you personally to conquer in this lifetime?

If you had the opportunity to be a king, would you accept the responsibility, and over what country would you preside?

If you could redraw any geographical boundary, what would it be and why?

If you could rewrite a day in world history, how would you do it?

With which character in literature do you most identify?

Does being a billionaire affect your view of a higher being?

All that passenger Fadila al-Oglah remembers was a "great heat in my face, like a blazing fire. Somehow I was outside the ambulance, and I found a big barrel of water and started to wash my face from the heat. It was all I could think of, despite the screaming and smoke, this terrible heat."

Abbas Jiha recalls hurling himself from the door of the ambulance just before it crashed into the house. The videotape shows the immediate aftermath: wounded in the head and foot, Abbas Jiha stands in the road beside one of his dead daughters, weeping and shrieking "God is great" up into the sky, toward the helicopter.

The camerawoman, Najla Abujahjah, recalls running toward the ambulance. "I couldn't get the doors open because the vehicle was wedged in the room. But there were three children inside who were clearly in the last seconds of their life." Najla then heard a strange scraping sound. "The missile had set off the windshield wipers, and they were going back and forth against the broken glass, making this terrible noise. It will haunt me the rest of my days."

In all, six people were killed, including Abbas Jiha's wife, Mona, and three of his children. Overwhelmed with grief, he tore at the vehicle with his bare hands, soon followed by the U.N. Fijian troops from the checkpoint. The Israeli helicopter remained in the sky over U.N. Checkpoint 1-23 for another five minutes. Then it flew away.

Within hours the Israelis admitted that they had targeted the ambulance, but they claimed that it was owned by a member of Hezbollah and was carrying a Hezbollah guerrilla. Both charges were untrue. There were no apologies.

Within a week, another atrocity—the bloodbath at Qana, in which 109 Lebanese refugees were massacred—had eclipsed this particular horror, eventually bringing Operation Grapes of Wrath to an ignominious end (and failing to win Shimon Peres reelection).

What were these terrible weapons that were now being used in Lebanon? Who sold them to the Israelis? And, if it was an American company that had manufactured the missile, what conditions were attached to its sale?

**A**mong the fragments of shrapnel and twisted steel, a young U.N. officer soon discovered a hunk of metal bearing most of a nameplate. It contained the logo "AGM 114C" and a manufacturer's number: 04939. The U.N. officer knew that AGM stood for "air-to-ground missile," and the 114C coding identified the five-foot-three-inch projectile as a Hellfire anti-armor missile, jointly manufactured by Rockwell International and Martin Marietta. Ac-







asked about Israel. "We do not get information from the Israelis about what they've done," one of the men replied. "They don't give much information."

From my camera bag I then produced the missile fragment. I laid the shard of iron on the table. I told the men the date of its use, the location, and the results.

Bob Algarotti said, "I'm getting a little uncomfortable." But the Colonel was angry. "This is so far off base, it's ridiculous," he said. I begged to disagree. They manufactured the missile. Didn't they bear some responsibility for its use—at least to ensure that it was used responsibly by their clients? "Are you on some kind of crusade?" the other executive asked. What was I looking for? For some sign of compassion from them, I replied. One of the men in the room said, "I, as a person—sure I have feelings, but as a Boeing company employee, all we do is make missiles."

I agreed to lay down my pen while the three men discussed how they could frame some statement of their feelings. Both executives clearly felt deeply troubled by the events that I

described. But they didn't want Boeing involved. One man said to me, twice and in identical words, "Whatever you do, I don't want you to quote me as saying anything critical of Israel's policies."

Then one of the executives made up his mind. "Let me speak as a soldier, not as an employee of Boeing," he said. "No professional soldier is going to condone the killing of innocent people as targets. We're trained to preserve the peace. . . . Of course, the Boeing company is troubled if its weapons are misused or targeted against, you know, innocent people. But we build weapons systems to U.S. requirements; we get permission to sell to many different countries—"

I pulled from my bag photographs of the aftermath. The executive to my left looked through them with an expression of horror. Then he said, "I don't want these." He slid the pictures over to the Colonel, who looked at them and gently returned them to me.

We parted with handshakes. I told them to keep the Hellfire missile fragment; I was returning it to them. And as I left the room, I heard a voice behind me say, "I don't think we'll put this one in the trophy room."

When I returned to Europe, I got a follow-up call from Boeing. Bob Algarotti told me that his people had been studying the missile fragment. Although they could not guarantee it, they now thought that it had been made in the late Eighties in Orlando by Martin Marietta, now Lockheed Martin.

When I called Lockheed's director of communications, Al Kamhi, who, by chance, was staying in London, he was aware of my discussions with Boeing but insisted that he couldn't help me. "I have no way of knowing if that missile ever came from where you say it came from. . . . [Boeing] can be as convinced as they want to be. . . . I'm not going to start looking at missile fragments from . . . Their origin is totally unknown—I'm just not going to do that."

I told Kamhi that I wanted to know the response of the company that made the Hellfire to the events that took place when its missile was used. "I have no comment on what took place," he replied. "Our sales are made through foreign military sales . . . that's the way it's done, through the Pentagon." I repeated that U.N. officers had found the missile in the ambulance. There was no doubt about its provenance. Our conversation continued in an even more bizarre manner:

KAMHI: Well, frankly, the missile has nothing to do with the manufacturer.

FISK: But you made it.

## [Model] TOYS 'R' U.N.



*This toy, built by children in Kuito, Angola, is modeled after the United Nations' armored personnel carriers that are patrolling the country as part of a peacekeeping mission. Its body is made from cooking-oil containers distributed by the U.N. World Food Program; its wheels, from rubber flip-flops. The toy was featured in issue number 14 of COLORS magazine.*



KAMHI: Well, we make a lot of things too . . .

FISK: But I mean, do you care about the use to which your missiles are put by those people to whom you sell them? I mean, this is a very important point, sir.

KAMHI: I'm sorry, I'm not going to dignify that question with a response. . . . No matter how I respond to that question, we all of a sudden are the bad missile manufacturer. We make missiles. We make electronic systems. We make a variety of defense systems. And it is our hope that they're never used. . . . We don't know that the missile was misused. A missile can miss . . .

I explained to Kamhi that the Israelis admitted that the ambulance had been the target. Then they should respond to it, he said. But when I suggested that the U.S. government itself was concerned about the uses to which its weaponry was put by clients, Kamhi changed his tone, though only slightly. "We're always concerned when someone is hurt," he said. "As far as why the missile was used . . . there's no way we can control or understand why."

Eventually Al Kamhi agreed to let me drop off at his London hotel a packet of news reports on the killings, along with the missile codings and the photographs of the Hellfire fragment. So the next day I took the Chunnel train from Paris to London and proceeded to the Britannia Hotel, where Al Kamhi was staying. He was not in, so I left the package at the reception desk, receiving a promise that it would be handed to Mr. Kamhi the moment he came back to the hotel.

Three days later, the same package—opened but resealed—arrived at my office's foreign desk in London. Return to sender.

[Interview]

## A TERRORIST MOVES THE GOALPOSTS

*From an interview with Rashid Sakher, an Islamic Jihad suicide bomber, in the documentary film Shaheed, written and directed by Dan Setton and released this year. Sakher, who is being held in the Gaza Prison, was arrested in April 1996 prior to his planned attempt to blow himself up on an Israeli bus.*

DAN SETTON: How were you recruited by the Islamic Jihad? What did they tell you?

RASHID SAKHER: They told me about martyrdom, about death in the name of God. They told me that as a Shaheed ["witness"] I will

[Confrontation]

## PAT ROBERTSON'S THIN BLUE LINE

*From testimony filed last October in Bern v. Robertson, a libel case against evangelist Pat Robertson, by Shepherd "Bubba" McClenny, a Virginia Beach process server who had attempted to serve Robertson with court papers.*

On October 15, 1996, I attempted to serve legal papers upon M. G. [Pat] Robertson in offices on the thirteenth floor of the Dominion Tower in Norfolk, Virginia.

I introduced myself to Mr. Robertson and shook his hand. I showed him the legal papers, at which time his personal security officer removed them from my hand and instructed me to follow him. Talking on a handset radio, he called lobby security and requested that an officer meet him in the lobby. Once there, he led me out the front door of the building, returned the papers to me, and told me that if I was here when he came back, my "ass" was his.

I called Jeremiah Denton [a lawyer representing the plaintiffs suing Robertson] on my cellular phone from outside, and he instructed me not to go anywhere, that he was coming right down. He arrived and we proceeded back to the thirteenth floor to again attempt service on Mr. Robertson.

Upon entering the office, I was confronted by Glen Huff [Robertson's lawyer]. I showed him the papers and asked him to move out of the way so I could serve Mr. Robertson, who was behind closed doors in the next room. Mr. Huff said he was sorry he could not do that and physically blocked my access to the door. Mr. Denton entered the room and, after determining that I had been physically obstructed, said, "Come on, Bubba," and walked forcibly past Mr. Huff, who stepped out of his way.

Mr. Huff and Mr. Robertson's bodyguard then followed us into the room, began circling around me, and again physically obstructed my access to Mr. Robertson. Finally, with Mr. Robertson approximately three feet away from me, I reached between Mr. Huff and the security guard and dropped the papers at Mr. Robertson's feet. Mr. Robertson said, "I'm not taking those papers; I'm not accepting service."

I informed Mr. Robertson that he had been served and left the room amid animated conversation.



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ensure a place for my family in Paradise and that I will marry seventy-two virgins in Paradise. I will be God's holy martyr. They told me that there is a sum of \$6,000 for the explosion. When I exploded, my family would get the money.

SETTON: What did they tell you to do with the explosive device?

SAKHER: They told me to board a bus in Tel Aviv.

SETTON: Would you tell me a little bit about the Islamic Jihad?

SAKHER: The Islamic Jihad calls for the destruction of Israel as well as attacking Israeli targets all over the world, until Israel withdraws from Palestinian land and Palestine is liberated all the way to the sea.

SETTON: Do you personally hate the Jews?

SAKHER: Yes, I despise them. They took our land.

SETTON: Have you ever heard in the course of your life a sentence in the Koran forbidding the killing of women, children, and the elderly?

SAKHER: There is no such sentence.

SETTON: There is no such sentence in the Koran?

SAKHER: No.

SETTON: In the last bombing in Jerusalem, were women and children hurt?

SAKHER: I don't know who was there exactly. It's a fact, though, that soldiers were killed in the operation at Beit Lid. Soldiers who were someday destined to kill Palestinians.

SETTON: But there are millions of Jewish soldiers. How can you kill all of them?

SAKHER: The Prophet, what did he say? There is no way that when a Jew meets a Muslim he doesn't think of killing him.

SETTON: That means that every Jew—

SAKHER: Other than that the Prophet, may he rest in peace, said that not even one hour should pass when a Muslim does not fight a heretic. We should not be idle for even one hour.

SETTON: Rashid, what do you miss most being in prison?

SAKHER: I miss soccer.

SETTON: Which of the Israeli soccer players do you follow?

SAKHER: Reuven Atar from Haifa, Al Rahi from Petah Tikva, Haisham Zohabi from Be'er Sheva, Zahi Armeli from Tibbeh. Of the Jews, Ronnie Rosenthal, Ronen Harazi, Itzhak Zohar.

SETTON: What do you think of the quality of soccer in Israel compared with soccer in the Occupied Territories?

SAKHER: With us, forget it. It hasn't reached even the minimum level. We have to im-

prove, we have to develop. A man cannot climb all steps of a ladder at once.

SETTON: Will you allow me to ask you a difficult question?

SAKHER: Go ahead.

SETTON: If [the Islamic Jihad] came to you and ordered you to perform a terrorist attack in a large soccer stadium, where there are Jews and Zionists, what would you do?

SAKHER: No. I couldn't do that. No.

SETTON: But they are Zionists. They are non-believers.

SAKHER: Yes, they are nonbelievers. But on a soccer field? I couldn't do that.

[How-to]

## ASSASSINATION: A PRIMER

*From "A Study of Assassination," a training manual written by the CIA and distributed to agents and operatives at the time of the agency's 1954 covert coup in Guatemala, which ousted the country's democratically elected president, Jacobo Arbenz-Gúzmán. The manual, which was among some 1,400 pages of files on the operation that the agency released in May, was obtained by the National Security Archive, a public-interest group in Washington, D.C.*

### DEFINITION

"Assassination" is a term thought to be derived from "hashish," a drug similar to marijuana that is said to have been used by the eleventh-century Islamic leader Hasan ibn al-Sabbah to induce motivation in those of his followers who would carry out political and other murders, usually at the cost of their lives.

### EMPLOYMENT

Assassination is an extreme measure, and it should be assumed that it will never be ordered or authorized by any U.S. headquarters, though officials may in rare instances agree to its execution by members of an associated foreign service.

No assassination instructions should ever be written or recorded. Ideally, only one person will be involved. No report may be made, though the act will usually be properly covered by news services.

### JUSTIFICATION

Murder is not morally justifiable. Assassination can seldom be employed with a clear conscience. Persons who are morally squeamish should not attempt it.





*Learning to Swordfight at School for Sikh Boys," by Raghu Rai. The photograph appears in India: A Celebration of Independence, 1947 to 1977, published by Aperture. Rai lives in New Delhi.*

#### CLASSIFICATIONS

The techniques employed will vary depending on whether or not the assassin himself is to be killed with the subject. If the assassin is to die with the subject, the act will be called "lost." If the assassin is to escape, the act will be called "safe." It should be noted that no compromise should exist here. The assassin must not fall alive into enemy hands.

Assassination techniques will also be affected by the subject's vulnerability. Assassinations in which the subject is unaware of his danger will be termed "simple"; those in which the subject is aware but unguarded will be termed "chase"; those in which the victim is aware but guarded will be termed "guarded."

A further division concerns whether or not it is necessary to conceal the fact that the subject was actually the victim of assassination. If such concealment is desirable, the act will be called "secret"; if concealment is immaterial, the act will be called "open." If the assassination requires publicity to be effective, it will be termed "terroristic."

Following these definitions, the assassination of Julius Caesar was safe, simple, and terroristic, while that of Huey Long was lost, guarded, and open. Obviously, successful secret assassinations are not recorded as assassinations at all.

#### THE ASSASSIN

Except in terroristic assassinations, it is desirable that the assassin be transient. In a lost assassination, the assassin must be a fanatic of some sort. Politics, religion, and revenge are about the only feasible motives. Since a fanatic is unstable psychologically, he must be handled with extreme care. While Trotsky's assassin has never revealed any significant information, it was unsound to depend on this.

#### TECHNIQUES

A human being may be killed in many ways, but the assassin should always be cognizant of one point: Death must be absolutely certain. The attempt on Hitler's life failed because those planning the conspiracy did not give this matter proper attention.



Techniques may be considered as follows:

#### *Manual*

It is possible to kill a man with bare hands, but very few are skillful enough to do it well. Even a highly trained judo expert will hesitate to risk killing by hand unless he has absolutely no alternative. The simplest local tools are often the most efficient means of assassination—a hammer, ax, wrench, screwdriver, fire poker, kitchen knife, lamp stand, or anything hard, heavy, and handy. A length of rope or wire or a belt will do if the assassin is strong and agile. All such improvised weapons have the important advantage of availability and apparent innocence. The obviously lethal machine gun failed to kill Trotsky where an item of sporting goods succeeded.

#### *Accidents*

For a secret assassination, the contrived accident is the most effective technique. When successfully executed, it causes little excitement and is only casually investigated.

The most efficient accident is a fall of seventy-five feet or more onto a hard surface. Elevator shafts, stairwells, unscreened windows, and bridges will serve. Bridge falls into water are not reliable.

A private meeting with the subject may be arranged at a properly cased location. The act may be executed by a sudden, vigorous tripping at the ankles, tipping the subject over the edge. If the assassin immediately sets up an outcry, playing the "horrified witness," no alibi or surreptitious withdrawal is necessary.

Falls in front of trains or subway cars are usually effective, but these require exact timing and can seldom be free from unexpected observation.

Automobile accidents are less satisfactory. If the subject is to be deliberately run down, exact timing is necessary and investigation is likely to be thorough. The subject may be stunned or drugged and then placed in a car, but this is reliable only when the car can be run off a high cliff or into deep water without observation.

#### *Edge and Blunt Weapons*

Any locally obtained sharp-edged device may be successfully employed, though a minimum amount of anatomical knowledge is needed for reliability. The most reliable methods are severing the spinal cord in the cervical region (with the point of a knife or a light blow with an ax or hatchet) and severing the jugular and carotid blood vessels on both sides of the windpipe.

As for blunt weapons, their main advantage is their universal availability. A hammer may

be picked up almost anywhere in the world. Baseball bats are widely distributed. Even a rock or a heavy stick will do, and no weapon need be disposed of.

Blows should be directed to the temple; the area just below and behind the ear; and the lower, rear portion of the skull. Of course, if the blow is very heavy, any portion of the upper skull will do. The lower frontal portion of the head, from the eyes to the throat, can withstand enormous blows without fatal consequences.

#### *Explosives*

A small or moderate explosive charge is highly unreliable as a cause of death, and time-delay or booby-trap devices are extremely prone to kill the wrong man.

Bombs or grenades should never be thrown at a subject. While this will always cause a commotion and may even result in the subject's death, it is sloppy, unreliable, and bad propaganda.

#### EXAMPLES

[Agents] may be presented brief outlines with critical evaluations of the following assassinations and attempts: Alexander of Yugoslavia, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Gandhi, Harding, Hitler, Lincoln, Long, Mussolini, Rasputin, Roosevelt, Trotsky, and Truman.

[Appreciation]

## IN PRAISE OF INVECTIVE

*From an essay by Charles Simic in Orphan Factory, a collection of Simic's writing to be published in October by the University of Michigan Press. Simic was born in Yugoslavia; he now lives in New Hampshire. Simic received the 1989 Pulitzer Prize for poetry.*

**A**t the end of a murderous century, let's curse the enemies of the individual. If, in order to do so, we must fall back on the vocabulary of abuse, so be it.

This is what I learned from twentieth-century history: Only dumb ideas get recycled. Every social reformer longs to be the brains of an enlightened, soul-reforming penitentiary. Everyone who is vain, dull, peevish, and sexually frustrated dreams of legislating his impotence. The image of a billion people dressed in Mao's uniforms and shouting from his little red book continues to be the secret hope of new visionaries.



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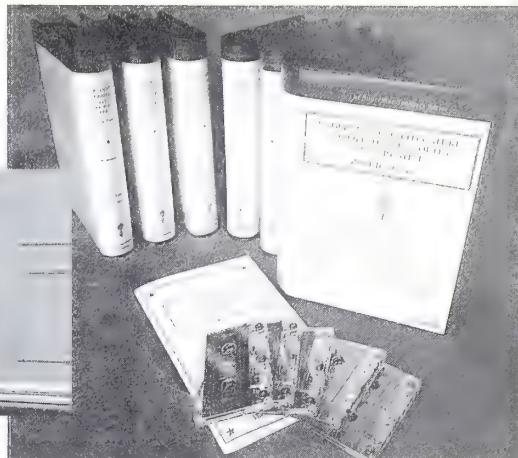
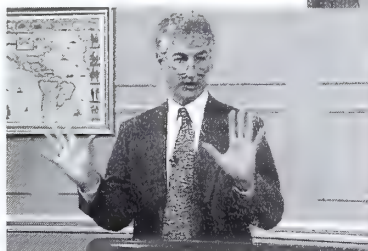
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This photograph by Pär Quick, appeared in the Summer issue of *Forum Hassellblad*, published in Göteborg, Sweden. Quick lives in Örebro, Sweden.

So, against ideologies from nationalism to racism, let us wield what the poet Cornelius Eady calls “the tongue we use when we don’t want nuance to get in the way.”

**T**he first and never-to-be-forgotten pleasure that language gave me was the discovery of “bad words.” I must have been three or four years old when I overheard my mother and another woman use the word “cunt.” When I repeated it myself, when I said it aloud for all to hear and admire, I was slapped by my mother and told never to use that word again. Aha, I thought, there are words so delicious they must not be said aloud!

I had a great-aunt who used such language every time she opened her mouth. My mother would beg her, when she came to visit, not to speak like that in front of the children, but my aunt paid her no mind. To have a temper and a foul mouth like that was a serious liability in a Communist country. “We’ll all end up in jail because of her,” my mother said.

There are moments in life when true invective is called for, when it becomes an absolute necessity, out of a deep sense of justice, to denounce, mock, vituperate, lash out, in the strongest possible language. “I do not wish to be weaned from this error,” Robert Burton wrote long ago in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*. I agree. If there is anything I want to enlarge and perfect, it is my stock of maledictions.

**O**nce one comes to understand that much of what one sees and hears serves to make fraud seem respectable, one is in trouble. For instance, long before Parisian intellectuals did so, my great-aunt had figured out that the Soviet Union and the so-called people’s democracies were a scam and a lie from the bottom up. She was one of these women who sees through appearances instantly. To begin with, she did not have a good opinion of humanity. Not because she was a sourpuss and a viper’s nest of imaginary resentments. Far from it. She



liked eating, drinking, a good laugh, and a quick roll in the hay behind her elderly husband's back. It's just that she had an unusually uncluttered and clear head. She would tell you that our revolutionary regime, which regarded loose tongues and levity as political crimes and those caught in the act as unhealthy elements, was a huge pile of shit, and that included Marshal Tito himself. Her outbursts were caused by what she regarded as other people's gullibility. As far as she was concerned, she was surrounded by cowards and dunces. The daily papers and the radio drove her into verbal fury. "Admit it," she'd yell at my mother and grandmother. "Doesn't it turn your stomach to hear them talk like that?"

If they agreed and confided in a whisper that yes, indeed, these Commies are nothing but a bunch of murderous illiterate yokels, Stalinist stooges, and whatnot, she still wasn't happy. There was something about humans as a species that worried her to no end. Cursing them, I imagine, gave her royal pleasure and, unknown to her, gave pleasure to me too, listening behind the closed door with a shameless grin.

I knew a thirteen-year-old boy who wrote a letter telling off President Johnson for the conduct of the Vietnam War. It was some letter! Our president was an idiot and a murderer who deserved to be napalmed himself, and worse. One evening, as the boy and his mother and sister were sitting around the kitchen table slurping their soup, the doors and the windows leading to the fire escape flew open at the same time, and men with drawn guns surrounded the table. "We are the FBI," they announced, and they wanted to know: Who was Anthony Palermo? The two women pointed at the boy with thick glasses and crossed eyes. Well, it took a while to convince them that he was the one who wrote the letter. They were expecting a full-grown assassin with long hair and an arsenal of weapons by his side.

The obvious point here is that the vileness and stupidity my aunt found so enraging is not limited to Yugoslavia or Eastern Europe or Communism but is alive and well and should be railed at, with our most pointed and inventive tongues, in our own democratic state.

"What do you want from me, blood?" I once heard an old woman shout at the workers in a New York City welfare office. She then kept cussing for another five minutes, not because she had any expectation that the wrongs done to her would be righted but simply in order to make herself feel good and clean for one brief moment.

[Strategy]

## THEY SHOOT MONKEYS, DON'T THEY?

From "What Do You Do for a Living? Or, 'So You Torture Harmless Animals for a Career?'" a speech given last fall by Dr. Wendeline L. Wagner at the annual meeting of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science in Minneapolis. Wagner is a veterinarian at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

A lot of us in lab-animal research are scared of talking about what we do for a living. People come up to us and say things like, "I hear you shoot monkeys for research." They've seen *60 Minutes* once, or an episode of *20/20*, and they've decided that's the way it is. My sister recently got a flier from PETA, and she asked me, "Is it true that you do this?" Most people think that if something's in a glossy brochure, it must be true.

Your first inclination might be to say, "Oh, no, no, no," and back off and get quiet. But these people aren't upset at you—they're just throwing out the little information they've acquired. Usually they're intelligent people who just don't know anything about what we do. We make things worse when we get defensive, as if our work were shameful.

Some people, of course, simply dislike research and researchers. They believe that it's morally wrong to perform tests on animals. You are probably never going to convince them to see your side, and shouldn't try.

Most people, however, are curious to debate the issues. When you start talking, get them to clarify their terms. People frequently begin by asking, "How can you do that?" Don't just assume that you know what they mean. Ask them, "How can I do what?" They may then ask, "How can you kill animals all day?" and you can answer, "That's a small part of my day."

The research community is often accused of saying that everything is wonderful, that nothing suffers. That's unbelievable. You can admit that it's not all peaches and cream. But immediately follow up with something intriguing and upbeat.

Use positive language. If you change mouse boxes, and you tell your family that your job is cleaning mouse cages, they're going to say, "Oh, great. That's a career?" Think beyond that. What do the mice do? They have a purpose. You can say, "I work with mice used in Alzheimer's research." My personal description





"Nouice," by Deborah Bright, from *Being and Riding*, a series of photographs of toy horses in bondage. Bright's work was on display in March at the Atlanta College of Art Gallery in Atlanta. She lives in Somerville, Massachusetts.

is, "I take care of animals that are used in medical research. I see everything from mice to monkeys." An animal pathologist I know, who has potentially the least positive-sounding job in the field, asked me what he should say—"I kill animals all day and cut them apart to find out why they died?" I decided that a better alternative was, "I determine the cause of illness and death in research animals."

It's also a good idea to manipulate conversations so as to discuss the things you'd rather talk about. For instance, we have an animal-care person who looks after our pigs. If someone asks him what he does for a living, he could just say, "I take care of pigs used in research." But a better answer includes a little story. He might say, "I take care of pigs that are used in transplant studies, and boy, does that smell terrible at eight o'clock in the morning. But you know, when they get to know me and start gnawing on my boots and begging to have their backs scratched, it isn't too bad." This

makes the situation believable and diverts listeners.

**W**hat do you say when people ask about testing cosmetics? The FDA requires cosmetics

companies to test their products on animals. If a company says that it doesn't do animal testing, it means that the company doesn't *personally* do it but either pays someone else to do it or uses ingredients that have been previously proven safe. If someone argues that we shouldn't test on animals just for the sake of beauty, I agree and say, "That's probably true. It is cruel to make animals die just for the sake of beauty. If you could convince a whole nation of women not to wear cosmetics, we could stop testing on animals. But as long as we wear makeup, it must be safe."

When I was in high school, I had awful acne. Being a sixteen-year-old girl, I slathered on anything that might work. I was dealing with open wounds, and you could not have convinced me not to try anything. When I talk to teenagers, I point this out. Some squirm, some smile, some understand. I am very happy now to know that I was safe at the time, and that those years of doctoring open wounds are not going to affect me in the long run.

If nothing else, just remember that if you don't have pride in what you do, you're never going to convince anyone of the value of your work. That doesn't mean you can't have doubts and bad days. I remember euthanizing a breed-



ing rat colony—almost 100 rats—in just an hour. I was depressed, and I had a bad day. But in context, that was it—just one bad day. Overall, I'm intensely proud of what I do. If you are unable to summon up any pride before you talk to someone, then you're in the wrong job.

[Criticism]

## RAISING OUR OWN TITANICS

From "Mrs. Straus's Devotion," by Jenny Diski, in the June 5 issue of the *London Review of Books*. Diski is the author, most recently, of *Skating to Antarctica*, a memoir.

**A**lthough eighty-five years have passed since the sinking of the *Titanic*, it should not surprise us that we are revisiting the theme again: in movies, a Broadway musical, and countless books. Fantasy and cultural mythmaking have been the main responses to the disaster almost from the moment the news was received.

Now we have a cookbook, *Last Dinner on the Titanic: Menus and Recipes from the Great Liner*. (This is perhaps the first of a last-supper series—to include recipes and ideas for staging a Hiroshima sashimi evening, a Dresden barbecue, the *Marchioness* cocktail party, and God knows what they were eating with the Marquis during the 120 days of Sodom.) The book allows us the chance to see just how much of this mythmaking has been filtered through class mystique.

Along with recipes for the dishes served that night in first, second, and steerage class, there are complete instructions for hosting a *Titanic* dinner party. In order to get fully into the spirit of things, formal invitations and dress advice should be sent to guests weeks in advance on decorative cabin tickets "filled out with their names, the number of servants accompanying them, and the number of cubic feet of luggage to be taken." Apparently, the authors of *Last Dinner* are not anticipating that many readers will reenact that final meal in steerage.

The authors take to lamenting when they get to the evening's menu. They tell us regretfully that there is no way of knowing exactly what was on the menu at the ship's four-star *A la Carte* restaurant, whose food and service were superior even to those of the first-class dining room, because, "unfortunately, none of the surviving passengers who ate there on the last evening tucked a copy of the menu into the

[Trademarks]

## THE PENDING MILLENNIUM

From a list of trademarked brand names and phrases that have recently been registered or are pending with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. The list includes applications submitted to the office since January 1, 1995.

**M**illennium champagne (The Mitten Group)

Millennium vacuum cleaners (White Consolidated Industries, Inc.)

Millennium pest-control products (biosys, Inc.)

Millennium floor wax (G. H. Wood + Wyant)

Millennium slot machines (NSM Aktiengesellschaft)

Millennium gas masks for protection against chemical and biological agents (Mine Safety Appliances Company)

Millennium undergarments (Maidenform)

Millennium Staffing temp agency (Adia Services, Inc.)

Milleniad deodorant (Takred, Inc.)

Millennium Minutes TV history segments (ABC)

Millennium Money scratch-off game cards (Taco Bell Corp.)

Millennium Legacy videos of the deceased for friends and relatives (James M. Oliver)

Millennium Time Capsule plastic long-term storage containers (Bascombe J. Wilson)

Millenniware date-conversion software (Carr Scott Software)

Chateau 2000: The New Millennium recreational vehicles (Thor Tech, Inc.)

Meal of the Millennium culinary events (The Mitten Group)

Living in the 3rd Millennium online services (Time Inc.)

Working Straight Through the Millennium (Time Warner Cable)

The Official Chocolate of the New Millennium (Mars, Inc.)

Official Sponsor of the Millennium (Miller Brewing Company)

Your Home Improvement Store for the Next Millennium (Homer TLC, Inc.)

Billing into the Next Millennium (Bell Atlantic Network Services)



pocket or a dinner jacket, so we can only surmise what the bill of fare included." The lower classes left a better record, but the authors aren't here for history: a damaged but still partially legible menu "recovered from the body of a third-class passenger" is given a full-page reproduction (porridge, smoked herring, and potatoes for breakfast) but is used only to authenticate the small steerage-class recipe section that follows.

Class and myth surround other aspects of the *Titanic* legend, most notably in the vaunted emblem of "women and children first." The story confirmed the idea not only of the difference between the sexes but of the innate nobility of the upper classes. "Does not the heart of every true American woman go out in tender loyalty to those brave men of the *Titanic* who yielded their valuable lives that the weak and helpless might live?" asked a letter writer to the *New York Times*. Indeed, the statistics do show that, for example, 91 percent of first-cabin women and children survived, compared with 31 percent of first-cabin men. But when you look at the survival figures in terms of the ship's classes, the story isn't as poignant: the overall figures show that 60 percent of first-cabin passengers survived, compared with 44 percent of second-cabin and 25 percent of steerage passengers.

More than chivalry was at play in the tone accorded to those "brave men" at the time—a note of regret that such financial and industrial eminences as John Jacob Astor, Benjamin Guggenheim, and Harry Widener should have given up their lives not just for their own women but for impoverished foreigners. The *San Francisco Examiner* eulogized the heroes whose places in the lifeboats and the world were taken "by some sabot-shod, shawl-enshrouded, illiterate and penniless woman of Europe." The essential nobility of the rich and famous, indeed the natural rightness of their wealth and fame, was confirmed by the public image of these men standing on the deck in tuxedos, smoking elegant cigarettes while the *Titanic* slipped ineluctably under the water. (A good bit of evidence suggests that the men might have thought they were better off waiting for help, but that's another story.)

These days *Titanic* cultists, from those who yearn to raise the sunken ship to those who stand in line at the theaters, seem to be looking for something in the wreckage. "Today everything's tourist class," moans Ed Kamuda, chairman of the *Titanic* Historical Society. The *Titanic*, he says, represents the loss of "a way of life which I and others long for."

Like those believers in reincarnation who are convinced that in previous lives they were pharaohs and potentates rather than slaves and serfs, so the dreamers of *Titanic* days assume

that their places would have been in the first-class smoking lounge rather than in the boiler room. That's what the past, if not history, is for. If, ultimately, we are all passengers on the *Titanic*—the cosmic implications of a ship lost in the void of an empty sea are not easily resisted—at least we can go down with our dreams of exquisitely appointed lives intact.

[Scene]

## THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

*From "What Do You Believe About the Future?" by David Auburn, in the Spring issue of the New England Review.*

Cast: Nine People

ONE: I believe that the United States will cease to exist as a country in my lifetime.

TWO: Really?

ONE: Sure. It's too big. It'll break up. In my lifetime. There'll be pieces. The . . . Republic of Seattle.

TWO: All right. I believe that men and women will walk on the surface of Mars.

ONE: When?

TWO: In our lifetime. We will see it happen.

(Beat)

THREE: I believe that we will walk on the surface of Mars.

ONE: Us?

THREE: Us personally, us.

ONE: No.

TWO: No chance.

THREE: I believe that it's possible. I believe that it's possible cars will eventually be phased out.

ONE: And replaced with what?

THREE: Some kind of train.

TWO: Are you out of your mind? There are always going to be cars. Always. We love cars.

They're the best. No one is going to ride in a train ever.

THREE: What if the train hovers?

TWO: So what?

ONE: Who cares if it hovers?

THREE: I think it might be neat.

FOUR: Hovering car.

THREE: What?

FOUR: If you can get a train to hover, you sure as hell can get a little car to hover.

ONE: Yeah, flying car!

THREE: I believe that in the future there will be trains that hover and—

TWO: Shut up.





"Fish to Tell" and "Nicole," by Seattle artist Shelly Corbett. The photographs were on display in June at the Linda Cannon Gallery in Seattle.

ONE: Tell us more about the flying car!

FOUR: The flying car will have a back seat like you wouldn't believe. Hit a button and it reclines. Put in a quarter and it vibrates. Put in a dollar, and the back seat lifts and arches and curves and wraps itself around you and whoever you happened to invite to join you in the back seat of the flying car that evening. And it vibrates and hums. Plus, you're hovering.

All over the country, the flying car will radically alter high-school make-out rituals.

ONE: There won't be a country.

FOUR: Whatever. The People's Republic of Utah.

(Beat)

FIVE: I believe that on New Year's Eve, 1999, there will be a rash of suicides. Thousands of suicides all around the world, maybe millions. A global epidemic of panic and mass despair. Not the religious nuts. Not the cults getting ready for the End. Just people in cities who didn't get invited to a good party.

(Beat)

SIX: I believe that vegetables will become much better.

ONE: How do you mean?

SIX: Better. More satisfying. Richer. Tomatoes like candy. Oranges so orange it hurts to look at them. Corn, ears of sweet corn with only three or four kernels per ear, but huge, swollen, bursting. Mighty broccoli like oak trees, providing shelter and nutrition. Fragrant lettuce. We'll all be vegetarians. Steak will come to seem bland and tasteless. Chicken, forget about it. We'll let the chickens go. Chickens will fly free again. They'll be wild birds, like eagles. Vacationing families, fathers on hikes with their children, will stop and point up in the sky: "Look kids! A chicken!"

(Beat)

THREE: Hovering boat.

TWO: What?

THREE: What about a hovering boat?

TWO: What about it?

THREE: I believe it would be neat.

TWO: Why are you so into this "hovering" thing?

THREE: It's very futuristic.

TWO: Who cares if it hovers?

FOUR: They *have* hovering boats. They're called hovercrafts.



FOUR: I'm nuts—no, I believe that in the future.

ONE: You're nuts and you already had your turn. The Greater Indiana-Ohio-Illinois Alliance.

FIVE: I believe the movie stars of today will stay popular. No actors of the future will be as famous as the celebrities of today are now, and their popularity will hold steady. The biggest stars of the year 2048 will be Sandra Bullock, Sean Connery, Brad Pitt, Winona Ryder, and Samuel L. Jackson.

Sean Connery will be 124 years old.

ONE: The Independent City-State of Orlando, Florida, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Walt Disney Company.

THREE: I believe that—

ONE, TWO, and FOUR: Shut up.

SEVEN: I believe that the madness of environmental devastation will continue. I believe that the tropical rain forests, and the jungles and wetlands, and the American redwoods that have stood since the time of Christ will continue to fall to the ax and chain saw. And the rivers will cloud with silt and overflow their banks and then run dry. And the small hole over Antarctica in the Earth's protective ozone layer will widen and spread, and our resulting continual exposure to intense ultraviolet radiation, combined with widespread intermarriage and the subsequent boom in biracial births, will end ethnic rivalries and racial hatred by producing a human race whose skin the world over is the color of a General Foods International Coffee.

(Beat)

EIGHT: I believe that I will get a date.

(Beat)

NINE: I believe that entire newspapers will be given over to the bridge column.

TWO: The LP record will make a major comeback.

EIGHT: I believe that the black-haired girl in line at the burrito place on Seventh Avenue who stared at me blankly and then turned away as if I didn't exist when I tried to make polite conversation last Friday will come to feel that she really missed an opportunity.

FIVE: I believe that brightly lit cities will sprawl so far and so wide that no stars will be visible at night anywhere in the world. People will visit planetariums the way we go to museums.

On New Year's Eve they'll rent out the planetariums for parties. And the demand will be so great they'll have to sell tickets. You'll wait in line for your allotted time. Of course, you'll want to be there right at midnight. Everyone will. So every ticket will say MIDNIGHT, even if you don't get in until four the next day. And the stars will be posi-

tioned exactly where they would be for you at midnight on New Year's Eve—if the stars were still visible from Earth.

[Poem]

## CANADA

By Billy Collins. Collins read the poem last month at the Port Townsend Writers Conference in Port Townsend, Washington. He is the author of *The Art of Dreaming*, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

I am writing this on a strip of white birch bark that I cut from a tree with a penknife.

There is no other way to adequately express the enormity of the clouds passing over the farms and wooded lakes of Ontario and the endless visibility that hands you the distance on a plate.

I am also writing this in a wooden canoe, a point of balance in the middle of Lake

Couchiching,  
resting the birch bark against my knees,  
feeling the sun's hot hands on my bare back.  
But I am thinking of winter,  
snow piled up in all the provinces  
and the solemnity of the long grain ships  
that pass the cold months moored at Owen  
Sound.

O Canada, as the anthem goes,  
scene of my boyhood summers,  
you are the pack of Sweet Caporals on the table,  
you are the dove-soft train whistle in the night,  
you are the empty chair at the end of an empty  
dock.

You are the shelves of books in a lakeside cottage:  
*Gift from the Sea* by Anne Morrow Lindbergh,  
*A Child's Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis

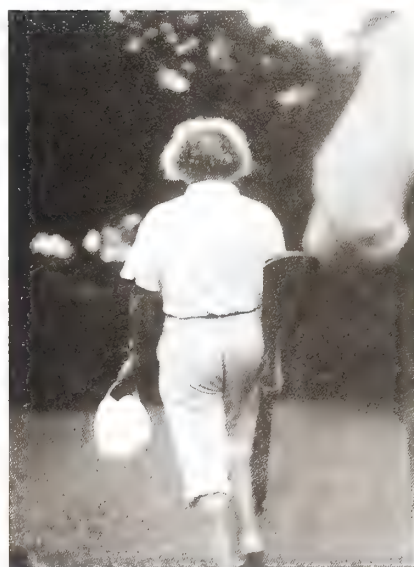
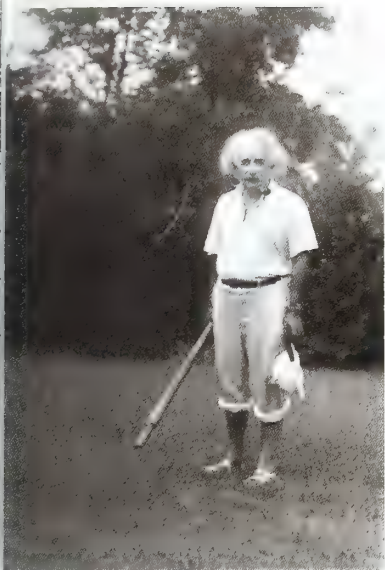
Stevenson,  
*Anne of Avonlea* by L. M. Montgomery,  
*The Myths of Greece and Rome* by H. A. Guerber,  
and *Peril Over the Airport*, one  
of the "Vicki Barr Flight Stewardess Series"  
by Helen Wells, whom some will remember  
as the author of "The Cherry Ames Nurse  
Stories."

What has become of the languorous girls  
who would pass the long limp summer evenings  
reading

*Cherry Ames, Student Nurse*, *Cherry Ames, Senior  
Nurse*,  
*Cherry Ames, Chief Nurse*, and *Cherry Ames,  
Flight Nurse*?

Where are they now, the ones who shared





These photographs of Albert Einstein were taken in Huntington, Long Island, in 1937 by German photographer Lotte Jacobi. They will appear in the first U.S. collection of Jacobi's photographs, to be published next month by Nicolai Verlag.

her adventures  
 as a veterans' nurse, private duty nurse, visiting  
 nurse,  
 cruise nurse, night supervisor, mountaineer  
 nurse,  
 dude ranch nurse (there is little she has not  
 done),  
 rest home nurse, department store nurse,  
 boarding school nurse, and country doctor's  
 nurse?  
 O Canada, I have not forgotten you,  
 and as I kneel in my canoe, beholding this vision  
 of a bookcase, I pray that I remain in your vast,  
 polar, North American memory.

You are the paddle, the snowshoe, the cabin in  
 the pines.  
 You are Jean de Brebeuf with his martyr's  
 necklace of hatchet heads.  
 You are the moose in the clearing and the  
 moose head on the wall.  
 You are the rapids, the propeller, the kerosene  
 lamp.  
 You are dust that coats the roadside berries.  
 But not only that.  
 You are the two boys with pails walking along  
 that road,  
 and one of them, the taller one minus the straw  
 hat, is me.



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# IN THE GARDEN OF TABLOID DELIGHT

Notes on sex, Americans,  
scandal, and morality  
*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*Caught in the relaxing interval between one moral code and the next, an unmoored generation surrenders itself to luxury, corruption, and a restless disorder of family and morals.*

—Will and Ariel Durant

**T**he news media last May bloomed with so exuberant a profusion of sexual scandal that by the first week of summer it was hard to tell the difference between the front-page political reporting and the classified advertising placed by men seeking women and women seeking men. Every day for thirty days some sort of new or rare flowering appeared in the garden of tabloid delight, prompting the headline writers to dance joyously around the maypoles of 72-point type, singing their songs of spring with lyrics supplied by a grand jury or the police. Some of the stories were better than others, and although not all of them resulted in invitations to talk to Oprah, even a brief summary of the leading attractions fairly describes the gifts of the season's abundance.

MAY 2—Eddie Murphy, noted comedian and screen actor, found by sheriff's deputies, at 4:45 A.M. on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood, in the company of a transvestite prostitute.

MAY 10—Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy declines to explain how it came to pass that his younger brother Michael, thirty-nine, embarked upon a love affair with the fourteen-year-old girl employed as the baby-sitter to his infant son.

MAY 20—Marv Albert, well-known television sportscaster, indicted in Virginia on charges of tearing at a woman's flesh with his teeth.



THE NEWS OFFERS MANY  
OCCASIONS FOR PIOUS OR  
RIBALD COMMENTARY—  
ABOUT PAULA'S MOUTH, OR  
MARV'S TOUPEE, OR BILL'S MOLE



MAY 22—Frank Gifford, another famous television sportscaster, reported to have been photographed in a New York hotel room, parading around on a bed with a woman not his wife.

MAY 22—Lieutenant Kelly Flinn, "the perfect picture girl" of the United States Air Force and the first woman to command a B-52 bomber, was drummed out of the service for committing adultery with a civilian career coach.

MAY 27—The Supreme Court directs the President of the United States to answer questions about the administration of his penis, all nine justices concurring in the opinion that the discussion cannot be postponed for reasons of state.

MAY 30—Staff Sergeant Vernell Robinson Jr. expelled from the United States Army and sentenced to six months in prison for forcing sodomy on five female recruits.

JUNE 1—Robert S. Bennett, the Washington lawyer defending President Clinton against the charges brought by Paula Corbin Jones (alleged sodomy, violation of civil rights), informs two television networks that he intends to entertain the court with tales of the plaintiff's lurid past.

JUNE 2—Major General John E. Longhouser announces his retirement from the army and resigns his command of the Aberdeen Proving Ground (the scene of the crimes committed by Sergeant Robinson) because an anonymous tipster telephoned his headquarters to report that five years ago, while briefly separated from his wife, the general had formed a liaison with a female civilian.

JUNE 3—Concerned Women for America characterizes lawyer Bennett's legal tactics as those "normally used by a rapist's attorney" and reminds him that two years ago President Clinton signed a law excusing sexually abused women from questions about their prior conduct.

JUNE 4 (late morning)—Lawyer Bennett disavows his proposed line of questioning. "I'm not a fool. It's my intention to take the case to high ground. . . . Her sex life is of no particular concern to me."

JUNE 4 (early afternoon)—Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen commends the appointment of Air Force General Joseph Ralston as the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, despite the general's confession that fourteen years ago (while separated from his wife) he carried on a love affair with a woman in the CIA. Secretary Cohen says that the time has come "to draw a line" against "the frenzy" of allegations spreading panic among military officers in all grades and ranks: "We need to come back to a rule of reason instead of a rule of thumb."

JUNE 6—The major news media, allied with indignant voices in both houses of Congress, overrule Secretary Cohen's call for reason. If bomber pilot Flinn must wear the scarlet letter, how then does fighter pilot Ralston escape the same marking?

JUNE 7—Congressman Kennedy informs 2,000 cheering delegates to the Democratic State Convention in Salem, Massachusetts, that he is "very sorry, so very, very sorry" for any damage that his brother might have done to the baby-sitter or the baby-sitter's family.

JUNE 9—General Ralston withdraws his name from consideration as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

**T**he news offered so many occasions for pious or ribald commentary that any chance of agreement about what any of it meant was lost in a vast din of clucking and sniggering. The upscale newspapers published prim, op-ed-page sermonettes (about the country misplacing the highest chest filled with old family values); down-market talk-radio hosts told prurient jokes (about Paula's mouth, or Marv's toupee, or Bill's mole); television anchorpersons were merely happy to be told that a lot of im-



people (many of them grown-ups and some of them celebrities) had been seen loitering (well past their bedtimes) on Love Street. Although a few of the country's more high-minded commentators attempted professions of shock and alarm, the sentiments didn't draw much of a crowd. Most Americans know by now that the country's travel guidebooks (government-inspected, church-approved) fail to account for the political, economic, social, and technological changes that over the last 100 years have reconfigured not only the relation between the sexes but also the Christian definitions of right and wrong. The old travel guidebooks were written for nineteenth-century travelers apt to fall in love with Satan in a San Francisco bordello, and either they require extensive revision or we need to adjust our present behavior. For the time being, the words don't match the deeds, and the ensuing confusion intensifies the currencies of scandal. But because not enough people can agree on common terms of discourse, whether to begin with A for Abortion or with C for Clone, whether to proceed with reference to the Kinsey Report or to the Kinsey Report, we avoid the arguments by classifying human sexuality as a consumer product—a commodity, like cereal or furniture polish, packaged under as many brands and in as many forms (powdered or freeze-dried) as can be crowded onto the shelves in the supermarkets of desire. The commercial presentations allow us to have it in many ways from the end and all ways from the middle—to meet the demand for hard-line feminist theory and the *Victoria's Secret* catalogue, Robert Bork's sermons and Tony Kushner's plays, for breast or penile implants and software programs blocking out displays of nudity on the Internet, for as many different kinds of marriage (homosexual, heterosexual, open, closed, Christian, pagan, alternative, frankly perverse) as can be met with the approval of a landlord. The contradictions show up every quarter of the society—posted on billboards and flashing on neon signs, available twenty-four hours a day on both the Playboy and Disney channels, in the fashion photographs selling Donna Karan's dresses and Giorgio Armani's suits, in David Letterman's jokes and Senator Strom Thurmond's speeches, in the mirrors behind a hotel bar or on the walls of a health club, in the leaflets and lectures distributed sometimes with condoms) to grammar school students, in newspaper headlines hawking big-city prostitutes with the same adjectives that grocery stores assign to the grapefruit and the plums. As might be expected of people engulfed in a haze of quasi-pornographic images, the subsequent confusion raises questions to which nobody has any good answers but which in the meantime provide the topics for the best-selling books of ethical self-help. What is moral, and where is virtue? Who is a man and who a woman, and how do I know the difference? Is marriage forever, or is it another one of those institutions (like the churches and the schools) wrecked on the reefs of progress? Do the doors of the future open only to people who observe the rules and watch their diets, or must we, as true Americans and therefore rebellious at birth, knock down the walls of social convention? Suppose for a moment that we wish to obey the rules: What do they say and where are they written? During the daylight hours such questions take the form of political debates—about a woman's due or a man's debt, about the reasons why a gay and lesbian alliance is marching in Beverly Hills, about the academic poetess who didn't receive tenure, or the diaspora of Real American men (hard-drinking and unshaven) tracking the spoor of William Faulkner's bear in a Mississippi forest. Like CNN or Batman, the questions never sleep, and late at night they turn inward and existential—I am inside the television set with Marv and Paula and Kathie Lee, or I am out here in the middle of nowhere with the wrong nail polish and the wrong season's beer? Is the search for the perfect orgasm like the search for the perfect apartment—always lost and never found? If I highlight my

WE CLASSIFY HUMAN  
SEXUALITY AS A COMMODITY,  
LIKE CEREAL, THAT CAN BE  
CROWDED ONTO THE SHELVES IN  
THE SUPERMARKETS OF DESIRE



IN 1947, GENETICS WAS A SUBJECT  
THAT HAD TO DO WITH MICE,  
A WOMAN'S PLACE WAS IN THE  
HOME, AND SEX WAS SOMETHING  
THAT HAPPENED IN FRANCE

hair and redistribute the weight of my stomach, will I live happily  
after in the land of Calvin Klein?

Maybe the questions need never be answered, but when and if we  
around to doing so, we at least should admit that the events of those  
fifty years can't be ignored or reversed. It's no good demanding (as  
quite a few of our prophets on the Christian and neoconservative right  
that the changes be sent back for credit to Bloomingdale's or L. L. Bean  
or that somehow it still might be possible to bring back the summer  
1947. Most of the changes probably have been for the better rather  
the worse. It's true that freedom doesn't come without its costs, but  
many people willingly would return to a society that insisted upon  
rigid suppressions of human sexuality dictated by a frightened aunt  
village scold? In 1947 a Hollywood movie couldn't be released to the  
public without the prior consent of the Hayes office, a bureau of censors  
loyal to the rules of decorum in effect at a New England school for boys.  
Husbands and wives couldn't be seen occupying the same bed, and chil-  
dren were brought into the world by storks. Under the threat of boycott  
by the Catholic Archdiocese of New York, Leo Durocher, the manager  
of the Brooklyn Dodgers, was suspended from the team during the 1947  
season because he was conducting a love affair with Laraine Day, an ac-  
tress to whom he was not married. The booksellers in Boston banned  
the sale of novels found guilty of sentences that described either a  
hero or heroine in states of wanton undress. Young men at colleges  
1947 hadn't been introduced to television, much less to Robert Mar-  
plethorpe or Helmut Newton; genetics was a subject that had to do  
mostly with mice, a woman's place was in the home, and sex was some-  
thing that happened in France.

Looking back on the transformations that have occurred within a  
span of my own lifetime, I remember that during the decade of the  
1960s, in the early stages of what later became known as the sexual revo-  
lution, the photographs in Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* magazine opened a  
window in what I suddenly saw as a prison wall made of sermon  
Protestant stone. I lose track of chronological sequence, but the changes  
seemed to change every year with the new fall clothes—first the lib-  
wardness of young women relieved of their inhibitions by the birth  
control pill, then the grievances (some of them surprising, most of  
them just) revealed in the commotion of the feminist movement, ear-  
tually the enlarged and public assertions of the gay and lesbian pres-  
ence, of view, lastly the news that women no longer require men to perform  
the functions of husband and father. These days a woman of almost any  
age can choose to bear and raise a child under circumstances matched  
to her own history and understanding of the world—with a husband  
with a man not her husband, from a zygote supplied by a sperm bank  
by a fertilized egg borrowed from her daughter or mother, by adoption  
with a gay man, by adoption with a lesbian companion, by adoption  
with herself as the sole parent.

Nor have the changes been confined to what Pat Robertson likes to  
imagine as the red-light districts of Los Angeles and New York, as if the  
appetite for sexual fantasy presupposed a jaded, metropolitan taste. When  
the news of adultery usurped the headlines in late May, the *New York Times*  
dispatched a reporter to search the country for pockets of Christian  
rebuke. Generals were falling like ninepins into the gutters of lust, and  
the editors assumed that west of the Hudson somebody cared. The re-  
porter, Carey Goldberg, returned with the news that not many did: a  
woman in Greenville, South Carolina, speaking on behalf of a clear ma-  
jority, observed that although adultery wasn't legal in her state, "In my  
day and time, it's going on everywhere, and I mean everywhere." When  
the authorities to enforce the law, she said, "everybody'd be in jail."

Among the guests who entertain Ricki Lake's afternoon television  
audiences with tales of their cross-dressing and cosmetic surgery, most



people onstage come from places like Des Moines, Iowa, or Grand Rapids, Michigan. To meet the demand of the nation's video stores (most of them located in suburban shopping malls) the pornographic film industry last year provided 7,852 new releases (as opposed to the 471 supplied by Hollywood), and under the tolerant auspices of the World Wide

Web, any child of nine sitting at a computer in Medford, Oregon, or Opa-Locka, Florida, can explore the landscape of sexual deviance first mapped by the Marquis de Sade.

About the perils of the voyage to paradise, the old moral guides were not wrong. What at first glance looks like a ticket to the islands of bliss often proves more nearly to resemble a reserved seat in one of the eight dress circles of Dante's "Inferno." I think of the numbers of people I've known over the last twenty or thirty years who sacrificed themselves on the altars of the imaginary self—marooned in a desolate marriage, so paralyzed by so many sexual options that nothing ever came of their talent and ambition, dead of AIDS at the age of thirty-one. The glittering invitations to everlasting orgy that decorate the drugstores and the movie screens are meant to be understood not as representations of reality but as symbols and allegories. Any customer so foolish as to mistake the commercial intent has failed to read properly the instructions on the label. One is supposed to look, not touch; to abandon oneself to one's desire in a cocktail lounge but in a nearby mall.

The credit-card statements don't show the arithmetic of human suffering and unhappiness. It might well be true that if South Carolina enforced the laws against adultery, everybody would be in jail, but it is also true that sexual promiscuity and infidelity causes more misery (for the featured players as well as for the children in the supporting cast) than ever gets explained in the program notes. Over the years I've listened to a good many stories of bed-ridden and loss, but none sadder than the one that appeared in the New York tabloids on June 9 about the eighteen-year-old girl, a student at the Lacey Township School in Ocean County, New Jersey, to whom a son was born at her graduation ceremony. During a break in the music, she left the ballroom, gave birth to the baby in a bathroom stall, wrapped it in paper towels, discarded it in a wastebasket, washed her hands, smoothed her evening dress, and returned for the next dance. From the perspective of the consumer market, the girl's actions make perfect sense. Sex is merchandising, and

the product of desire, like Kleenex, is disposable. In the garden of Eros, there is always a clean towel and another song.<sup>1</sup>

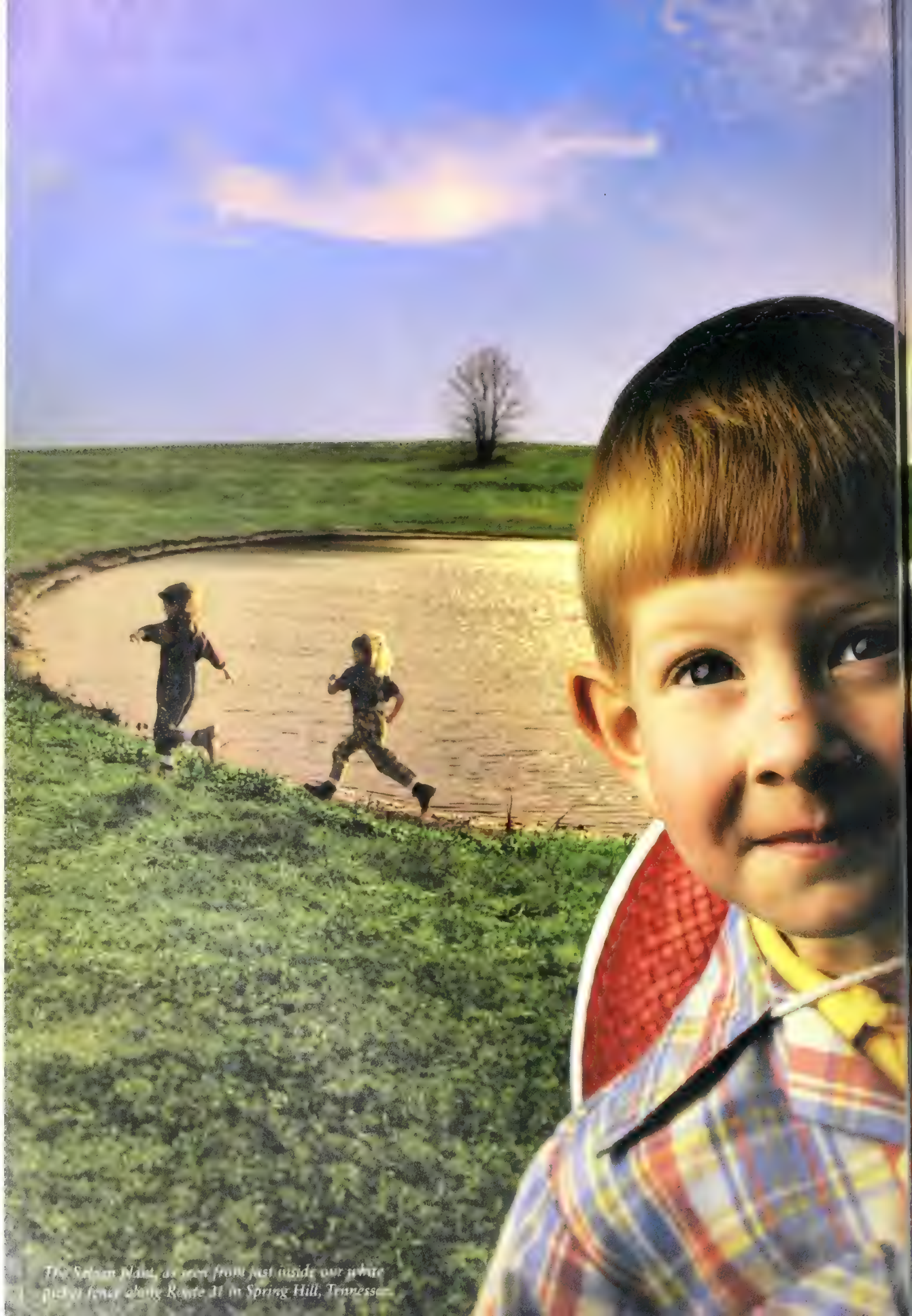
Like the high-speed computers that collate restaurant checks with telephone bills and drugstore receipts, the market can't tell the difference between adultery and a program of aerobic exercise; it doesn't know or care who said what to whom or whether the whip was meant to be used on a slave from Kentucky or a gentleman from Toledo.

*babies dropped into garbage cans sometimes survive, but the one who died at the prom reminded me of another newspaper story I had read several weeks earlier about the Lacey Township School. The administrators apparently were worried about rumors of sexual malfeasance on the part of faculty or staff, and so they had ordered all adult personnel to approach the students with extreme caution. No touching, no hugs, no possibly suspicious pats on the shoulder, and when face to face with a student at a distance of less than three feet, the teachers and custodians were to raise both arms above their heads in a gesture of surrender. Both incidents (the one brutal, the other absurd) exemplify the character of what Will and Ariel Durant described as an "unmoored generation" drifting between one moral order and the next.*

SEX IS MERCHANDISING,  
AND THE PRODUCT OF DESIRE,  
LIKE KLEENEX, IS DISPOSABLE.  
THERE IS ALWAYS A CLEAN  
TOWEL AND ANOTHER SONG







*The Salmon Nant, as seen from just inside our white pickup truck along Route 31 in Spring Hill, Tennessee.*



It's nice to know the environment also impacts the auto industry.



It's down Route 31, south about a mile and a half from the center of town, but pretty much hidden behind the land where the old Haynes mansion still stands. It's a very special place that we now call

home. But it was special long before we got here. Over a hundred years ago, the fields around us saw Union and Confederate armies clash. In times more recent, these rolling green hills were home to several champion horses. One of which still holds the record as world's fastest pacer. Even today a little history is being made here by the fact that we're the only car plant we know of to employ a full-time farmer. Yep, we make it all, doors, fenders and alfalfa.

Which makes our home a very special place indeed.



THE 1997 SATURN SW1



*It's important that we look after the land around us. That's why, last year alone, we recycled, reused or reclaimed almost 59,503 tons of material. And when we built the plant, we did even more. We kept it from spoiling your view from Route 31 by excavating soil, building hills and transplanting trees already on the site. Heck, we even put birdhouses up all around.*

**A DIFFERENT KIND of COMPANY. A DIFFERENT KIND of CAR.**

This 1997 Saturn SW1 has an M.S.R.P. of \$12,595, including retailer prep and transportation. Of course, the total cost will vary. Accessories, options, taxes, title, license, and other fees are extra. © 1996 Saturn Corporation.



THE TABLOID PRESS DRAWS  
NO DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE  
POLICIES OF THE PRESIDENT'S  
PENIS AND THE THREAT OF  
NUCLEAR ANNIHILATION

Human beings who tailor themselves to the measures of the machine float like numbers across the surface of the computer screen. Without strength and frame of a moral order—some code or rule or custom—provides them with a way and a place to stand against the flood of their own incoherent desire—they too often lose the chance for love or meaning in their lives, unable or unwilling to locate the character of their minds or build the shelters of their own happiness.

The loss of identity is good for business. The conditions of weightlessness not only set up the demand for ballast—heavier gold jewelry, bigger golf clubs, bigger cigars—but also encourage the free exchange of identities, which, like the liquidity of cash, preserves the illusion of infinite options and holds out the ceaselessly renewable prospect of buying into a better deal. The pilgrims in search of a more attractive or plausible face can try on the 1,001 masks to which Freud gave the name of the amorphous perverse and to which the trendier fashion designers now attach the labels of androgynous chic. The structures of gender present themselves as so much troublesome baggage impeding the migration into F. Scott Fitzgerald's "orgiastic future." Let human sexuality be understood

as a substance as pliable as modeling clay, and maybe it becomes an asset, easily worked into the shape of a stock market deal, a music video, a celebrity crime.

**T**ransferred to what was once known as the public square, this descent into narcissism makes of politics a trivial pursuit. A society adjusted to the specifications of the tabloid press draws no invidious distinction

between the foreign and domestic policies of the President's penis and the threat of nuclear annihilation. The stories guarantee record sales at the newsstands. On the day after the Supreme Court certified Paula's complaint against Bill (which also happened to be the day on which Boris Yeltsin announced at the NATO conference in Paris that Russia no longer would target its missiles on New York or Washington) the newspapers assigned the bigger headlines to the targeting error that either did or did not take place six years ago in an upstairs room of the Excelsior Hotel in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The distribution of news value should have come as no surprise. The voters last November saw in Clinton's narcissism a reflection of their own self-preoccupations, and although well aware of his appetites for hard women and big money, they were happy to send him to Washington as a representative of their collective moral confusion—a man no better than the other men that one was likely to meet at a sales conference or in a topless bar, always smiling and polite but in it for the money, in his own way as much of a hustler as Paula, as lost as most everybody else in the haze of amorphous sexuality. One day he appears in his machine-line character (speaking sternly to the Serbs or the Albanians, making the strong, decisive, executive movements expected of a successful American businessman); the next day he shows up smiling like a debutante, pouring sentiment and sympathy into the teacups of the White House press corps, bravely holding back the tears that he otherwise would shed for a flood victim, a welfare mother, or a stray dog. Who but the old fools at the Pentagon could expect such a man to keep his penis in his pants or his finger out of the Boston cream pie? The poor fellow is always so desperately needy, so insatiably eager for approval and attention, that it's a wonder he hasn't yet sold the Lincoln Memorial to a Korean amusement park.





President so obviously unable or unwilling to tell the difference between right and wrong (much less, God forbid, to stand on or for anything other than the platform of his own need) clearly cannot ask anyone to grow up. He presents a role model not unlike that of Peter Pan (it is an increasingly stout Peter Pan) and so excuses the rest of the nation from the tedium of moral homework. With such a President, why bother to aspire to an adult code of ethics? We need not seek our own selves, and in the meantime we inoculate ourselves against the viruses of age and idealism, which, as the advertising agencies well know, depress sales and sour the feasts of consumption.

Sex in the United States is no laughing matter, and although the commercial synthetics tend to leech the life out of the enterprise—the sense of meaning and the hope of intimacy as well as humor and eroticism—I take it for granted that the promises of eternal youth and everlasting orgy will continue to be more widely available and more innovatively sold. I'm glad that I'm not twenty years old, my name, address, and I am stored in a data bank available to any mail-order operation. I expect it probably would take me another twenty years to solve the riddle of my own identity, which is, of course, the point. If I knew who I was, why would I keep buying new brands of aftershave lotion, and how then would I add to the sum of the gross domestic product?

Given the sophistication of our current marketing techniques and the boundless resource of human curiosity and desire, the media undoubtedly will continue to post their scarlet letters and deliver their requiems of scandal. The demand for gaudier sensations, for more television sex and brighter lip gloss, presumably will foster competing markets in small-time puritanism. Absent a unified field of moral law that commands a sufficiently large number of people to obedience and behavior, with what else do we fill in the blanks except a lot of little rules—rules about how to address persons of differing colors or sexual orientations, about when to wear fur and when not to eat grapes, about what to drink and where to smoke?

Although I can imagine books of rules as extensive as encyclopedias, I can't imagine them quieting the rage of the market. If I can lust after the women on 300 pornographic cable channels, why can't I order one from a shopping network? Maybe the finer resort hotels will furnish their first-class suites with hospitable, omnisexual tennis pros in the same way that they place little squares of chocolate on the pillows. Who knows but that it might be possible to design one's children in the way that one decorates a house, choosing preferred characteristics (gray eyes, sixty-four mph, strong backhand) from swatches of DNA instead of from bolts of fabric or chips of paint. If the editors of the *Globe* can pay an airline stewardess \$75,000 to pose with Frank Gifford for the video camera in the Regency Hotel, what will they bid for the sight of a fireman in bed with Barbara Walters?

For the time being, and not yet having discovered a system of moral law that corresponds to the workings of big-time, postindustrial capitalism, where else can we live except in the garden of tabloid delight with Marv and Bill and Paula and Batman? Unless we wish to say that what is moral is what an insurance company will pay for (which, in our present circumstances, comes fairly close to the truth), what other engagement meets the presumption—accepted as revered truth on both the liberal and conservative sides of the bed—that ethics and politics constitute increasingly marginal subsections of economics? If the lights must never go out and the music must always play, how do we begin to talk about the discovery or construction of such a thing as a new moral order? Who has time for so slow a conversation? Who would hear what was being said?

ABSENT A UNIFIED FIELD OF MORAL LAW THAT COMMANDS US TO OBEDIENCE, HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN NOT TO EAT GRAPES AND WHERE TO SMOKE?



# SPINNING THE POOR INTO GOLD

How corporations seek to profit from welfare reform

By Barbara Ehrenreich

The Poor People's Campaign, the need to reform but not to influence it, to help her and teach her to lead in a better and freer life.

personal ed. *The Dallas Voice* (WVPA)

**T**he registration fee for corporate participants at the conference on "welfare privatization" held in Washington, D.C., in late March was \$1,200—an amount almost equal to a year of welfare benefits for a Mississippi family of three. But that a Mississippi family on welfare was likely to venture into the hotel where the conference was held, which rents rooms for somewhere between \$300 and \$400 a night, discounted to \$150 for conference participants. With its muted modern decor and cavernous lounge space, the Pal Hyatt presented itself as a setting in which the affluent can gather discreetly, over topics of mutual interest, undisturbed by any low-income people except for those who might inform and be able to perform small acts of personal service.

I first learned of the conference from a welfare advocate who told me, indignantly, the conference brochure, with its promise that the gathering would be "made it a time for companies seeking to capitalize on the massive growth potential of the new world of welfare reform. Gain a leading role in the market while it is still early stage. Profit from the opportunities available." Until that time, my only acquaintance with the concept of welfare privatization came from a September *New York Times* article in which the sharp-eyed Nina

Bornstein revealed that Lockheed Martin, Electronic Data Systems (EDS), Andersen Consulting, Unisys, and a host of smaller companies were proposing to take over the states' ancient burden of processing and rehabilitating the poorest of the poor. "We're approaching the marketplace the way we approach all other marketplaces," the article quoted Lockheed senior vice president Hollis Plopp. And why not? Government at all levels currently spends \$28 billion a year administering welfare programs, a tempting price for a company facing the prospect of long-term declines in defense spending. The "peace dividend" liberals have awaited with the patience of a cargo cult, since the end of the Cold War in 1989, won't be spending on social programs after all but welfare transmogrified into corporate welfare.

According to conference organizer Susan (pronounced "suan-ah") Bacvanovic, an expertly dressed young woman who patrolled the gathering with a flight attendant's air of reluctant helpfulness, it was this same article in the *New York Times* that had inspired her colleague at the World Research Group with the notion that welfare privatization might be an appealing conference theme. This New York-based, for-profit firm, James Lockheekotly indifference to the actual content of the conference, it specializes in the staging conferences on anything that might attract well-heeled participants—and, in the old syntax of its Web site, "handles all aspects asso-

Barbara Ehrenreich is a columnist for the Dallas Voice. The Inner Life of the Middle Class, coming out in 2000, is *The Middle Class: Culture and History of the Past and the Future of Working-Class America* by Robert Lynd.



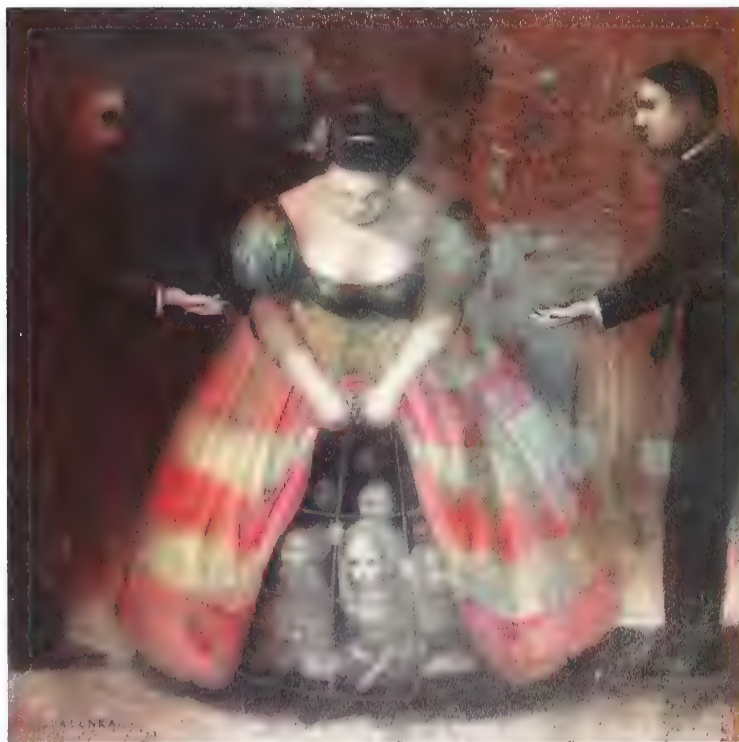
with the superior implementation of our  
its," from "topic research" to "hotel con-  
ing." In addition to welfare privatization,  
World Research Group has held, or will  
hold, conferences on airport manage-  
t, music and technology, satellite services  
dia, mining in Mexico, and "interactive  
ts." Privatization is a favorite theme for the  
p's productions—privatization of power in  
il, for example, or of prisons in the United  
es. The brochure for the group's December  
5 conference on prison privatization exults,  
ile arrests and convictions are steadily on  
rise, profits are to be made—profits from  
e. Get in on the ground floor of this boom-  
industry now!"

o this was, in all its superficial markings and  
outrements, the generic corporate confer-  
e. One morning I accidentally wandered in-  
another business-oriented conference being  
on the same floor of the Hyatt, and it took  
se reading of the name tags to determine

I was in the wrong place. There was the  
spread of coffee and croissants in the cor-  
r, the same windowless ballroom containing  
same long tables set primly with notepads,  
cils, and ice water. For despite the occasion-  
pulence of their venues, the culture of cor-  
te conferences is a deeply ascetic one. At  
Hyatt, the proceedings began each morning  
before nine and stretched to five-thirty or  
nearly nine hours of continuous lectures  
panels enlivened by few pleasantries or  
hing that could be construed as a joke. The  
ptions were Mayor Bruce Todd of Austin,  
as, who attempted to lead the seventy or so  
erees in a chorus of "Good morning's," and  
n Curtis of Curtis & Associates, a firm that  
motivational sessions to prepare welfare re-  
ents for the work world, who had members  
re audience stand and hold up signs refer-  
to "Child Care," "Housing Subsidies," and  
er forms of government help that presum-  
block the recipient's path to successful em-  
pment. Other than that, the only respite  
a sensory deprivation was the handsome  
or slides favored by the corporate presenters.  
st of these merely displayed an outline of  
tever the speaker was saying ("Asset Sales  
Divestitures/Long-Term Franchise/Out-  
cing..."), though a few approached the lev-  
f surreal calendar art, such as the one offered  
Robert D. Tyre of Andersen Consulting,  
ch showed the sun rising or setting over a  
landscape of undulating hills, above which  
words "New Realities" were stamped.

ut the very blandness of the conference may  
e been a mercy. Better to feel you were in a  
p that could have been discussing any-  
g—Indian satellite service or new opportu-

nities on the Internet—than to let your imagi-  
nation wander for one moment to the human  
actualities portended by one suited speaker after  
another. As it happened, in the weeks leading  
up to the conference there had been a series of  
news reports on the likely effects of Clinton's  
welfare-reform bill, which, among other dire  
measures, ends the federal government's sixty-  
one-year-old obligation to the poor, sets a five-  
year lifetime limit on welfare for any individual,  
requires adult recipients to find work, and other-  
wise turns what remains of welfare over to the  
states in the form of unspecified block grants.



While the conferees were settling into their spa-  
cious rooms, Peter Edelman, the former Health  
and Human Services official who resigned last  
September to protest the bill, was traveling  
around the country, arguing that shoving mil-  
lions of the welfare poor into sub-subsistence-  
wage jobs—often without child care or health  
insurance—will result in rising homelessness,  
malnutrition, infant mortality, family violence,  
and crime: "new realities" that are perhaps best  
contemplated against a remote and  
mythical landscape.

**M**onday morning began with a "Wel-  
coming Address" delivered by William D. Eg-  
gers of the Los Angeles-based Reason Founda-  
tion, a libertarian think tank that exists to  
promote the privatization of government ser-



...vices and that, according to its report "Privatization '96," is happy to stock conferences with keynote speakers. A youthful fellow, with hair stylishly long on top, Eggers seemed both eager to please and confident that what he had to say was of such an intrinsically pleasing nature as to require no oratorical effort on his part. Announcing that welfare privatization is now "probably the hottest area [of privatization] in the country," he promised three days of solid information on such matters as "performance contracts" and "capitated services." Plus there was good news for the public-sector representatives in the audience: Texas state officials, he told us, expect to cut their welfare costs 30 to 40 percent by contracting them out to private vendors such as Lockheed and EDS.



But the atmosphere of bureaucratic rationality was soon punctured by the perorations of the third speaker, Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation. A thin, slightly hunched-over fellow with the gray buzz cut and thick glasses of a wonkish monk, Rector has built his career on the argument that poverty is not so bad after all, and what there is of it is the result of misguided government generosity. In 1990, for example, when the U.S. Census Bureau issued a report stating that 13 percent of the population, or 32 million Americans, were below the poverty line, Rector had responded with an op-ed piece in

the *Wall Street Journal* arguing that 22,000 of the supposed poor actually owned homes, swimming pools or Jacuzzi's—an extrapolation appreciated chiefly by connoisseurs of statistical sophistry.

Described in the conference program as the author of the welfare-reform provisions in the Contract with America, Rector was there to remind us that the purpose of welfare reform was not simply to redirect government money from the poor to the corporate elite but to save the nation from sin—the sins, in particular, of sloth, lust, and the resulting epidemic of "illegitimacy." Drawing on the kind of analysis made famous in the 1980s by right-wing intellectuals as George Gilder and Charles Murray, Rector explained that welfare does not help the poor; it is, in fact, what makes them poor, or at least what makes them demoralized and dependent, crime-prone and addicted, and, worst of all, preoccupied. This view permeated the conference, as if no one, including the representative of the Clinton Administration who spoke briefly on Monday afternoon, had ever heard of the numerous studies—some by former Clinton welfare official Mary Jo Buehler (who resigned in protest along with another man)—showing that there is no correlation at all between the amount a state provides in welfare to mothers per child and its rate of out-of-wedlock births. But no irritating counterevidence intruded on Rector's presentation, from which it would have been easy to conclude that welfare functions, semen to impregnate the poor single-handedly. Welfare, he told us, "rewards dysfunctional behavior" such as out-of-wedlock childbearing, whereas welfare reform will somehow encourage marriage" by withdrawing the free-flowing benefits. (Later, the conference's other ideological heavy hitter, the Cato Institute's Michael Tanner, ratcheted up the racial imagery, telling us that black men were being "cuckolded" by the welfare state.)

Rector had only one slide: a colorless photograph showing the caseload carried by Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the nation's erstwhile primary welfare program, declining over the last few years in the United States as a whole and declining even faster in the state of Wisconsin, where Governor Tommy Thompson effectively ended welfare about three years before the federal welfare-reform bill was passed. Commenting that "even a Harvard Ph.D. could see the difference" between the two lines on the graph, he explained that Wisconsin's "success" was due largely to "apportionment dissuasion," or the imposition of work requirements so strict that "people never



in the door in the first place." When I asked what had happened to the almost 40,000 children shed by the Wisconsin welfare system—whether they had found jobs, for example, or had simply sunk into deeper destitution<sup>1</sup>—he answered that "poverty isn't good for kids. Most of us had grandparents who were poor." The real problem is illegitimacy, which has "a decisive bad effect on kids," which will end when we no longer use welfare to discourage the poor from having children. For a child, perhaps even a legitimate child (though this was not specified), thirteen years on AFDC was "thirteen years of child abuse." The one problem with the welfare-as-semen theory is that, so far, the absence of welfare-as-anybody-knew-it has not produced the hoped-for decline in Wisconsin's rates of teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births—a result that Rector would only term "a paradox."

Recognizing another paradox, or at least an apparent contradiction, at lunch I made my way to an empty seat next to the Reason Foundation's William Eggers. How, I wanted to know, did he reconcile his libertarianism with the ambient demands to regulate the reproductive behavior of the poor? As the baked-salmon entrée was cleared to make way for a five-inch-structure of ice cream and chocolate, he explained, first, that he wasn't a 100 percent libertarian, and, second, that the receipt of government aid seemed to him to justify the consequent loss of freedom. What about mortgage-interest deductions for the middle class and the affluent, I asked (which average \$6,600 per household per year, \$2,100 more than the average AFDC grant for a family of three)? Could these deductions entitle the government to dictate the lifestyles of wealthy homeowners? Eggers, whose conference bio describes him as the author of the book that made "the free economy during the last two years," nodded and nodded at this novel perspective. I had heard such an argument once before, from a fellow in California, or maybe it was gone, he confided vaguely before turning his attention back to the dessert tower, now dribbling promiscuously into a brown and white pool.

Assuming that welfare leads to moral decay and that the only goal of reform is "case-reduction," as speaker after speaker suggested, why bother with privatization? Surely

the public sector could turn away applicants every bit as efficiently as any profit-making firm and has, in fact, been known to "churn" welfare recipients, or hassle them off the rolls, as state and local budgets require. According to Rector, though, this is "the last thing in the world they [the public sector] know how to do"—a theme repeated by other speakers. Pub-

## FORMERLY, ONLY GOVERNMENT COULD DECIDE WHO WAS ELIGIBLE FOR WELFARE; NOW THAT ROLE MAY BE PARCELED OUT TO UNDEREMPLOYED WEAPONS MANUFACTURERS

lic-sector welfare suffers from a "culture of permissiveness" to the point of apologizing to clients, we were told, for the newly imposed work requirements. Furthermore, it was manifestly clear to the conference speakers that the "attributes of personal behavior," in the words of Austin's affable Mayor Todd, welfare recipients need to acquire are best instilled by the private businesspeople who will become their employers. Punctuality, appropriate dress, and an agreeable demeanor were all mentioned at one time or another, either by the speakers or in the slides and videos they presented.

In fact, privatization was already under way, in a scattershot fashion, well before the advent of Clinton's welfare reform. The defense contractor BDM International Inc. won a contract to automate New Mexico's welfare system as early as 1988; Lockheed was in the business of collecting child support and fingerprinting (or "finger-imaging," as the euphemism goes) recipients in various states; Curtis & Associates and the job-brokerage firm America Works were propelling recipients into the workforce in Buffalo, San Francisco, and other cities.

But with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act signed by Clinton in August 1996, the way was cleared for private takeover of even the most intimate and fateful act of state-sponsored welfare—the determination of eligibility, a process that has always involved a measure of subjective judgment. Under the old welfare law, only government entities could distinguish the poor from the not quite so poor, the deserving from the undeserving; but this requirement vanished when the federal government block-granted welfare off to the states. The states will still set eligibility levels, but it will be up to the private contractors to determine which individuals fit them. To highlight the new flexibility, the 1,229-page welfare-reform act stipulates that a state may administer its welfare program "through contracts with charitable, religious, or private orga-

<sup>1</sup> Milwaukee saw sharp increases in homelessness and the use of soup kitchens last winter, as well as a small increase in reported cases of child abuse and neglect.



nations"—a Mormon temple, for example, or an underemployed weapons manufacturer.<sup>2</sup>

The calls I made before the conference uncovered no evidence that private companies had actually lobbied to make the welfare-reform bill so congenial to themselves. More likely, privatization was always a gleam in the eyes of at least some of the proponents of welfare re-

## NO ONE DEFENDED THE MUCH-SLANDERED WELFARE RECIPIENTS, PERHAPS BECAUSE IT WAS SO EVIDENT THAT THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THE PRIVATIZERS

form, since those who see the poor as objects for moral uplift tend also to see corporate America as the embodiment of efficiency and Protestant virtue. Florida Representative E. Clay Shaw Jr., the millionaire Republican who sponsored the welfare-reform bill in Congress, has stated that privatization is "exactly what has to happen for welfare reform to work." If the corporations lobbied for anything—and representatives of the welfare arms of EDS and Lockheed were observed hanging around Capitol Hill at critical times in the summer of 1996—it was for the bill to contain more funds for "information technology," a specialty of high-tech, defense-oriented firms. Although the amounts allocated were disappointing, according to EDS's Richard Ferreira, more money may yet be freed up for this purpose. One of the key provisions of the bill is its five-year lifetime limit on welfare, the enforcement of which will require a vast investment in technology to track individuals, through name changes and geographical moves, for decades on end—creating a veritable Foucaultian panopticon of surveillance and a growth industry for the finger-imagingists and information technologists.

However privatization managed to attach itself to the goal of "reform," the conference aimed at serving a matchmaking function between the thousands of state and county agencies entrusted with providing welfare and the scores of companies lining up to relieve them

of some part or other of this task. The conference brought together about a hundred representatives of the public sector, generally at the "deputy director" level, with a rotating cast of about a dozen of their corporate suitors. In strict sociological sense, the two parties in this potential "partnership"—public-sector "directors" and private-sector executives—are

members of the same professional-managerial social class. Both groups spend their normal working lives at desks or meeting tables—monitoring, managing, deal making, and coming up with ideas that people less than themselves will be assigned to implement. If the abstract connection between the two groups was not ill-

defined enough, the list of conference speakers was complete with individuals who had made only one about to make the transition from one to the other: Lockheed's Holli Ploog, for example, a former welfare administrator for the state of Alaska. Jason A. Turner, Wisconsin's director of capacity building; Richard J. Schwartz, "architect" of New York City's welfare reform; and Mayor Todd of Austin have all jumped ship for more lucrative careers either as independent "consultants" or as corporate administrators of welfare.

But at the Hyatt you didn't need an accountant to tell the difference between the public and private sectors. The corporate executives present, who were overwhelmingly male, wore expensive gray suits subtly indented at the waist; their faces were tanned, or at least lightly and peeled to a hearty glow; and they seemed on average, actually taller than their potential partners in the public sector. The representatives of state and county governments, on the other hand, were in some cases overweight, often bearded, and given to such fashion faux pas as navy suits, heavy gold cufflinks, or, in the case of (this from my home state of Montana) a button-down checked skirt worn with a matching pin-striped brodered sweater. To underscore their evident superiority, the corporate participants tended to sit not at the tables provided but along the walls at the very back of the room, in case their partners should rouse them to more urgent business outside. And while the public sector bent over its legal pads, none of the corporate people took notes, at least none that I could observe—beyond taking being, in the modern institutionalized text, a well-known gesture of submission.

For the public-sector people, the conference was in every way a punishing experience. There was the problem of sheer subsistence: the kind of miserly expense accounts provided by most state and county agencies; a participant from Suffolk County, Long Island, made the five-hour drive to Washington to

<sup>2</sup> Eligibility for Medicaid and food stamps must, by law, still be determined by government employees, and, if enforced, this requirement may stymie Texas's ambitious plan to privatize the administration of all benefits for the poor—welfare (now called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), Medicaid, and food stamps. In May the federal Health and Human Services Administration warned Texas not to flout the law. But Texas congressional representatives have introduced federal legislation to remove the restrictions. Alternatively, Texas may decide to utilize the loophole offered the state by HHS and begin the privatization of food stamps and Medicaid with "pilot programs" at the county level.



pay for airfare; several stayed in cheaper  
 ls from which they walked every day to the  
 erence. John Grexa, from New York's  
 tchester County social services depart-  
 t, shared with me his rueful discovery that  
 gle whiskey at the hotel bar goes for six  
 ars and change. But these were minor in-  
 ities compared with the relentless message  
 the podium: That the public sector, in its  
 missiveness," had screwed up, turning wel-  
 into something that "destroyed the lives"  
 e poor and created a shiftless underclass.  
 message, delivered most forcefully by Rec-  
 nd the Cato Institute's Tanner, was further  
 orced by the presence of the public-sector  
 ctors, whose "tough love" approaches to  
 are were now being rewarded with corpo-  
 jobs. When I playfully asked Grexa  
 ther any of the corporations had tried to re-  
 him yet, I got something between a death-  
 allow laugh and a snort.

was a scene that the cognoscenti of the far  
 t would have savored: public-sector "wel-  
 statist" writhing under the assault of their  
 orate and think-tank betters. If there is  
 social group that the American right de-  
 es more than the welfare poor, it is what  
 term the "new class," consisting of profes-  
 als and managers in the nonprofit sector—  
 idation executives, university professors,  
 alists, and, of course, government bureau-  
 s. According to neoconservatives, this new  
 is bent on ruling the United States much  
 heir counterparts in the nomenklatura once  
 the Soviet Union. Key to this takeover is  
 new class's exploitation of the poor as a ra-  
 ale for government expansionism, as ex-  
 ned, for example, in the pungent verbiage  
 he *American Spectator's* editor, R. Emmett  
 ell Jr.:

*he welfare state . . . turned many heretofore toiling  
 mericans into parasites, and this new class of busy-  
 dies live[s] as superparasites, deriving nourishment  
 om the dependence of the welfare clients.*

this sinister symbiosis between the new-  
 welfare statist and the hapless poor that  
 are privatization promises to end once and  
 all. Henceforth, the corporations themselves  
 manage the poor, while the erstwhile new-  
 cadre will have the choice of scrambling to  
 corporate jobs for themselves or, if all else  
 s, joining their former clients at corporate-  
 "job readiness" programs.

A few of the public-sector participants rolled  
 ur eyes during the fire-breathing lectures  
 a Rector and Tanner; several muttered over  
 h about the infomercial-like quality of the  
 orporate presentations. New York's Richard  
 wartz, for example, brazenly promoted his

fledgling company by beginning his talk with  
 the announcement that "there are only two  
 words you need to know for welfare reform—  
 'Opportunity America.'" But no one from the  
 public sector rose to defend either welfare sta-  
 tism or, sadly, even the much-slandered welfare  
 recipients, perhaps because it was so evident in  
 every presentation that the future belongs to  
 the privatizers: men like EDS's Robert G. Stauf-  
 fer, who had just returned from an internation-  
 al welfare-privatization conference held in  
 New Zealand, and Andersen Consulting's  
 Robert D. Tyre, who spoke of "surfing the [pri-  
 vatization] wave" as it sweeps the world. Com-  
 pared with these torchbearers of international  
 capitalism, proudly unrooted in any particular  
 issue or locality, a deputy social service director  
 from, say, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, is a  
 remnant of a dying culture.

I had been looking forward to the Monday af-  
 ternoon presentation by Lockheed's Holli Ploog,



if only because she was one of just three women  
 on the program and the only female speaker  
 from the corporate sector. But she turned out to  
 be not the fearsome Sigourney Weaver figure of  
 my expectations, just a mousy presence in black  
 and brown whose theme—"Virginia Child Sup-  
 port Privatization: Applying the Success to Oth-  
 er Human Service Areas"—sent a handful of the  
 audience sneaking out to refresh their blood caf-  
 feine levels. It was a good moment to catch up



on the free literature available to conferees, such as the March issue of *Governing* magazine, featuring corporate ads that seemed to encapsulate the conference itself. "Beginning to feel the effects of welfare reform?" demanded a two-page offering from Unisys. "You're caught in the middle of a welfare revolution. . . . It's a tough spot to be in. But Unisys EIS (Efficiency, Integrity and Self-Sufficiency) offers a way out." There was a full-page ad for a conference on "Marketing to State Governments," to be held in Las Vegas for a mere \$450 a person, which gave me the odd feeling that I wasn't at a distinct event at all but suspended in some airless continuum of interconnecting hotel ballrooms, decorated only with spreadsheets. But then Ploog wound to an end,



people wriggled in their seats, and we could congratulate ourselves on another orderly succession from speaker to speaker, without dissension or even much applause.

**T**he transformation of welfare is, as was clear by the end of Monday's session, a revolution without soul or solidarity, a matter of smelling money and drifting closer to it, the way an amoeba is driven, chemotactically, toward the molecular emanations of its prey. There is money in welfare, obviously, even in "reformed" welfare, and this attracts the corporations, which have learned from EDS's experience with Medicare in the 1960s that whenever

government money flows from one point to other, it is generally possible to siphon some. There also is money in advising corporation public agencies, and this in turn draws think tanks, such as Heritage and Cato. Reason. "If you ask me," a woman representing an independent, for-profit consulting firm whispered to me subversively during a coffee break, "welfare privatization means full employment for consultants." And there is, of course, money to be made in holding conferences that bring all these parties together. In addition to collecting the registration fees, the World Research Group offers corporations, for undisclosed prices, an "official lead-platinum" level of conference sponsorship, which includes a "guaranteed . . . speaking engagement," and an "official co-lead-gold" level of sponsorship, which comes with it "a confidential copy of the delegate list for your own marketing purposes."

But once you have accepted the idea that there is money to be made in anything, even the most laudable acts of charity, the only socially responsible question is: Can the corporations, and private "vendors" in general, do a better job than government at finding employment for the welfare population? This question was not raised at the conference, where the speakers unanimously assumed that, as one of them put it, the business community is "the genius in America . . . and the Western world." Even so, fragments of dissenting data surfaced disconcertingly here and there. In the course of making the point that government is "deadly efficient" at what it does, though what it does in the realm of welfare is clearly evil—Rector allowed that administrative overhead in government welfare agencies averages an admirably slim 10 to 15 percent; and hard to imagine firms such as Lockheed, which has fattened for so long on cost-plus defense contracts, improving on that. Later, Anders Consulting's Tyre mentioned a General Accounting Office study showing, as he put it, that "government agencies that aren't working will now won't succeed at privatization," which would seem to pose another "paradox": the agencies that arguably most need to privatize won't do a good job at it, and those agencies that have the capacity to do a good job of privatizing might be better off using that capacity to deliver the service themselves.

Clearly privatization involves more, on the part of government, than handing welfare management over to some public-spirited corporation and walking away. As officials of the unions that currently represent public-sector welfare workers were eager to inform me before the conference, the progress of welfare privatization to date has been blemished by a number of near-scandals and disappointments, unme-



ed by the speakers at the Hyatt. For example, GTech Corporation, which is the nation's largest operator of state lotteries and is the parent company of a firm under contract to administer food stamps in Texas, has been accused of rigging and influence peddling. Anderson Consulting's cost overruns led the Nebraska Department of Social Services to temporarily withhold its payments last January. America Works, which earns an average of \$5,000 for every welfare recipient it places in a job, has been repeatedly accused of "cream[ing]" the caseload for relatively low-skilled recipients who would have readily found jobs on their own. Maximus Inc. allegedly hired a West Virginia welfare administrator to join the company with inside information that would have helped it win a child-welfare-services contract. And when Orange County, California, set up a competition to see whether Maximus or the county welfare department should move the most welfare recipients into private care, it was the welfare department that won.

The question of how welfare privatization will work, though, hinges ultimately on that old mathematical mystery: Where will the profits come from? According to privatization's cheerleaders, corporations will not only extract hefty profits from welfare for themselves but also garner sizable savings (as much as 40 percent, as Reason's Eggers suggested) for government: a potential miracle on the scale of the miracles of the sea and the fishes. There were three or four representatives of public-sector unions on spy duty at the conference, dressed indistinguishably from most of the other participants in public-sector grunge, and it was their hands that were shot up at Q&A time to query, very politely, the source of the anticipated largesse. No one offered a clear answer: EDS's Robert Stauffer, for example, responded that the source of the savings was "undefined at this point of time." One possibility is that the firms will take their clients out of the services and allotments intended for the poor; this will be especially troubling if—as forcefully recommended by the author—the companies are paid solely for caseload reduction,<sup>3</sup> as opposed to being paid for finding long-term, decent-paying jobs for welfare recipients. It is no great trick to achieve effective levels of "application dissuasion"—by, for example, locating a welfare office several bus rides out of town and opening it on odd and erratic hours.

The other likely source of profits lies in the fees currently paid to the nation's tens of thousands of public-sector welfare employees—caseworkers, administrators, and clerical workers, most of them unionized, many of whom (thanks to the public sector's history of

relatively nondiscriminatory hiring practices) are female and/or black. Once privatization takes off, unknown numbers of these people will be displaced by lower-paid, nonunion corporate employees or even by machines. One of the

## WELFARE'S TRANSFORMATION IS A MATTER OF SMELLING MONEY AND DRIFTING CLOSER TO IT, THE WAY AN AMOEBA IS DRIVEN CHEMOTACTICALLY TOWARD ITS PREY

privatizers' favorite innovations—and the theme of a World Research Group conference held in late April—is "electronic benefit transfer," through which welfare grants and food stamps are distributed via "smart cards" and dispensed at the equivalent of ATMs.<sup>3</sup>

We may never know enough, though, to judge the private sector's performance in helping the poor to post-welfare-reform self-sufficiency. Clinton's welfare-reform bill has smashed that central moral bond, which linked the destitute to the rest of us, into thousands of fragments, and these in turn will be buried in contracts and, most likely, subcontracts, inaccessible to public view. Private firms are not subject to the same rules of financial disclosure as are the public agencies they will take over from, nor are they, given the threat of competition, particularly forthcoming about their operations. The potential for abuse or at least flagrant nonaccountability mounts when the contracts are drawn up and monitored, as they often will be, by public-sector managers eager to make the leap to the other side of the table. When Texas recently requested proposals from would-be vendors, for example, even those requests were not made available to the public. If secret deals and diffused responsibility are frustrating to journalists, imagine their effect on a welfare recipient who has been indentured by a local welfare department into a "work-readiness" program run by, say, Curtis when she goes to her Lockheed-operated ATM, presents a fingertip for identification, and finds herself rejected. Whom is she going to call?

There is, finally, the question of whether privatization can succeed in the terms set by the

<sup>3</sup> According to a GTech spokesperson, some of the "core technology" used in machines that issue lottery tickets is now being applied to the electronic transfer of welfare benefits operated by GTech's Texas subsidiary, Transactive. The spokesperson insists, however, that there is no plan at this time to design a multipurpose ATM that will allow welfare recipients to purchase their lottery tickets at the same time they collect their welfare benefits.



to reject all forms of welfare reform. The goal of reform, as espoused by Poerna and Tanner at the conference, is to stop welfare—and all forms of government aid to the poor—before they drag another victim into the quicksand of “dependency.” By comparison, the corporate speakers often sounded positively liberal—respectful of the public sector with which they would soon be “partnering” and even vaguely aware that larger issues of social stability may be at stake. EDS’s Stauffer fretted briefly about whether we are unwittingly “creating classes of society,” with one of them “earning \$6 an hour who’ll never get beyond that.” He reported that at the New Zealand conference he had just attended they’re “really worried” about what he called the “social and income gap,” although, he said, trailing off, “I’m not sure we should [be].” But it’s not hard to see how the profit motive alone could seduce the private vendors of welfare-related services into becoming a permanent constituency for continued government spending on the poor, much as companies like Lockheed serve as permanent constituencies for the Pentagon and some operators of privatized prisons have become lobbyists for prison construction. In his talk, Tanner had offhandedly denounced even the nonprofit Catholic Charities as a “pig at the trough” for its reliance on government funding, so I wondered how he felt about having Lockheed et al. become similarly habituated to public welfare spending—to the point, perhaps, of lobbying for more of it. When I cornered him with this possibility at a phone bank outside the ballroom, he gave me a momentary look of alarm and acknowledged that this would be a “perverse” outcome indeed.

The difference between, say, a moralist such as Tanner and a corporate privatizer such as Stauffer mirrors a larger ambivalence in American conservative politics. With one hand, the right pounds the pulpit convulsively for balanced budgets and a federal government shrunk to the size of a flyspeck on the Washington Monument. The other hand, however, routinely extends for whatever handouts—in the form of subsidies, tax breaks, or straight-out corporate welfare—can be coaxed or extorted from the public sector. There is, of course, no rule that a social movement has to be logically coherent. European fascists managed an unlikely blend of technological modernism and agrarian romanticism for much of the twentieth century; Gingrich slams “big government” even as he solicits the defense contracts that so richly nourish his congressional district in Cobb County, Georgia. Neither, for that matter, local movement activists and apparatchiks even have to know where they’re going or the name of the landscape around them. On the

last evening of the conference, I approached Betsy Meyer, who was still manning the registration table, to ask why there were no libertarians on the program. Her fairy-tale-princess smile faded up in triumph as she retorted, “Well, Michael Tanner from the Cato Institute is that’s very liberal.” It seemed pedantic, probably irrelevant to her career, to say that libertarian is not the same as liberal.

In the case of post-reform welfare, things may turn out nicely both for those who want to keep welfare and for those who want to force the rest of what’s left of it. What the moralists worry about above all is that welfare recipients who are supposedly lying about in drugged stupor will turn themselves out to low-paying but redeemer jobs. This outcome can only please a bare minority of the community irritated by the minimum wage, the sanctions against hiring illegal immigrants, and the occasional victories of union organizers. If anything else, the reform and privatization of welfare will create a huge pool of American workers who will have no choice but to take up for whatever jobs the employers have left over. First there will be all the welfare recipients who have exhausted their time on the dole and no longer have the option of returning to welfare if the boss is abusive or the children are sick. Add to these recruits the one third of the workforce that constitutes the working poor, who, in states where reform has begun, are already seeing their jobs lost and wages decimated as former welfare recipients tumble into the market. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the working poor will see their wages drop by 11.9 percent as welfare recipients are ejected into the workforce. Surely, in the emerging dystopia, Lockheed et al. will have a valued role to play—providing what’s left of welfare to the temporarily jobless, prepping the inexperienced, disciplining the discourteous, channeling people from one job to another, and generally trading in the desperation and helplessness of the post-welfare-reform poor.

I checked out of the Hyatt amid a sycophantic swarm of bellhops, doormen, and clerks to go to open doors, call a cab, or book me for a second visit. It was a ten-minute walk to Dupont Circle Metro stop, where I encountered my first nonuniformed low-income person more than three days—a young woman in gaudy layers of clothing who challenged me to give her some change. This, it occurred to me, was precisely the evil the conference aimed to save from: poor people, outdoors with no definite address, rand, surly and free. More likely, though, in the reformed and privatized future, there will be thousands more like her milling at subway entrances and maybe, eventually, even pressing up against the huge glass doors of the Hyatt itself.



# GARE DU NORD

By Suketu Mehta



Eibrahim rented the back room in Café du Nord, where he had set up his tables and to which he brought, through a small window in the cramped kitchen, masala dosas, idlis, meat curries, vegetable curry, and parathas. Outside the café, on the sidewalk, was a blackboard that said, “Masala dosa is my life.”

Eibrahim was a Tamil from Vietnam. He spoke, in order of fluency, Vietnamese, French, Tamil, Hindi, and English. As we left, he would always give us a paratha wrapped in aluminum foil—“from the heart,” he would explain, pressing the package to his heart before presenting it to us.

Suketu Mehta is working on a novel and a fiction book about Bombay. He lives in New York City.

Eibrahim motioned to three men at a table, and they quietly took up their plates and marched to the café in the other room.

The boundary between the restaurant and the café was invisible—there was no wall between the two; nonetheless, the division

A mixed lot ate at Eibrahim's. Mostly they were Tamils from Pondicherry or Sri Lanka, with the occasional French tourist of ethnic food who would try to eat her dosa clumsily with her fingers, all the while reading Nâzim Hikmet in translation. Then Eibrahim would bring her a fork. He was always very solicitous of his female French customers, though in a kind rather than an obsequious way. We once went to the restaurant with Françoise, and all four tables were full of Tamil men. Upon seeing Françoise,

was as palpable as if it were of concrete. In the café were Algerians, Moroccans, travelers from the station, and working-class Frenchmen. There was a fight, often involving knives, almost every night. But none of the tough guys came to the back, although we had to pass through the café to get to the restaurant, and if we wanted a beer Eibrahim had to get it from the woman who ran the café. So, eating our dosas, we could watch the fracas in the café in comfort and safety. Nobody fought in the restaurant. Ever.



Although we suspected that many of the Tamils eating with their heads close together over their curry were discussing ways to finance the Tigers in their homeland.

Eibrahim's was always a good place to take visiting relatives and friends; it showed a side of Paris not represented in the better arrondissements. No statuary or multicolored fountains, no aged ornate structures, no harmonious marriage of stone and river. The tables and chairs were the cheapest available; the room was filled with the noise of the video game and the jukebox from the café. Physically, the restaurant could have been in any large metropolis where exiles gathered. And it was cheap. For thirty francs, one could get a masala dosa with chutney and sambar and a beer. The sambar would be hot on alternate days; the other times it would be quickly reheated. But, we reasoned, it was the one and only place in Paris we could get dosas. And our guests liked to see Eibrahim recognize us, talk to us; it reassured them that we had found our bearings in the large city, that someone would notice if we were absent for long.

Those were very good times that year in Paris. We had plenty of money, plenty of friends, and the weather was fine. In the mornings we drank coffee and in the evenings we drank wine. Yes, in the mornings we drank coffee and in the evenings, wine. The tourists came in busloads around Notre Dame and the world was on holiday. Everyone was under thirty. The sunlight fell down in sheets on the white walls of the buildings outside our window. Sometimes we could see people in the windows facing us. Two girls in the spring afternoon came and sat by the window and smoked cigarettes as the light fell on their white faces and legs. It became hot, but it was the heat of Paris in June, warming rather than enervating, the kind of heat in which you go out after seven, walk endlessly, and have your dinner at a sidewalk table around eleven: chilled Beaujolais by the glass and

a large salad. The university students spent long afternoons in the small cinemas that showed American films of the Forties: Spencer Tracy and Frank Capra never died here. In the evenings we would go to the house of our friend Françoise, and she would put on scandalous songs by Serge Gainsbourg. Two rooms full of people would go about their business of eating, laughing, talking, while the loudspeaker poured forth the prolonged ecstasies of a couple making slow and intense love.

**I**t was a very long summer. The heat began in early May and increased in intensity till by the end of July the Parisians fled the city in masses for the sea. We had the city to ourselves, except for the tourists. The cafés near the river were filled with voices from Atlanta, San Francisco, the Upper West Side of Manhattan. But the population at Eibrahim's remained stable—the Tamils could not afford to go away on holiday and besides quite welcomed the heat. It may have been our imaginations, but the food seemed to get hotter as the summer progressed. When we went with Françoise, we would have to ask Eibrahim to tone down the heat for her sake.

It was toward the end of one of those long days, when it seemed impossible that the light would ever go out of the sky, that Eibrahim sat down with us. There were about seven of us, and we had been eating and drinking for over three hours. We had run through the limited repertoire of his kitchen, and the Tamil woman in there had hung up her apron and gone home. But the beer was still flowing, and we were in an excellent mood. We offered to buy Eibrahim a beer.

"I cannot," he said, indicating the white cap on his skull. "Mussulman."

"And yet you have no problems serving the devil's drink to us unbelievers!" said Jean.

Eibrahim laughed and said, "Even in my country I ran a bar."

"What is your country?" Françoise asked.

Eibrahim put his hands on the table, crossed them, and finally re-

sponded, "I come from Vietnam Tamil but I come from Vietnam."

"Do you still have family there?" "Yes." He was speaking very slowly. "I have . . . my wife is there, my three children. I have not seen them since 1973. Nineteen years. And four months."

No one was left in Eibrahim's of the café but us; in the corner room a swarthy man stood at the counter drinking his beer in silence. All of a sudden the pinball machine in the café erupted in a strange medley of sounds. No one was singing in front of it; the machine was singing to the void.

"It was because of the war?" asked Françoise.

"The war." Eibrahim wiped his forehead with his hand. "Yes, I know, when I first met my wife she was only a baby. She was . . . the daughter of my uncle's daughter. We used to play in the street, in Saigon. I know I grew up with my wife almost every day for twenty-five years. I spent with her. So then, in 1973 I have not seen her. I don't know what it means? It means that one day I see her, and then the next day she dies, and the next day she dies. Paris and my life is completely different. Three children she gave me, two sons and a little daughter, but she is alive. She will come to see me that I am sure."

"Why did you leave?" asked Jean with his usual tactlessness. "Why did you abandon your wife and children?"

Eibrahim's face jerked up at the none of your business," he said, and stood up. He looked down at us, and we knew we would have to leave.

After we left the restaurant, we walked around outside the Gare du Nord. It was a Tuesday night, and we were the only people out, but we were in such good spirits that we were a crowd all by ourselves. The street felt inhabited by the buildings around the Gare du Nord are filled with immigrants; it is as if having come off the train from their distant homes, they were so exhausted by the journey that they put their bags and baggage down in the first room they saw. It is not a pretty



he noise of trains and cars con-  
s the neighborhood from an  
hour. But maybe what keeps  
migrants in the area is the  
wledge that the first door to  
e is just there, in the station,  
blocks away. The energy of trav-  
is comforting, for it makes us  
hat the whole world, like us, is  
nient.

e were walking along the street  
a two Arab boys strode toward  
ry fast. They plunged right into  
middle of our group, and  
oise gasped, whirled, and called  
at their departing backs,  
ud!" The boys stopped, turned,  
walked slowly toward us.  
oise and the boys started argu-  
ehemently. We gathered that  
of them had squeezed her body  
brushed past her. "I am Arabi-  
nd I can do what I want!" said  
oy to François.

ere were only two of them,  
there were four men in our  
fo, but except for Jean we were  
eigners, and we could not fol-  
the argument. Jean stood next  
François and grabbed the boy's  
throat. At this, the boy's  
nd pulled out a knife and  
ed at Jean, cutting his arm. For  
ment we all stopped, astound-  
ecause now we had no knowl-  
of what we were supposed to  
The boys ran. We clustered  
nd Jean helplessly as blood  
d out from his arm. But it was  
very much blood, and it  
ed soon. Somebody had Band-  
in her purse, and we put a  
le on Jean's arm.

ce took the Metro to Les Halles  
ulence. Then somebody or the  
ve joked about the incident and  
yone laughed desperately. Out  
ate the fountain in Les Halles  
e were hundreds of people en-  
g the summer night, and we  
elt better. There was a café  
facing the fountain, and we  
n the terrace and drank and  
ed. All around us were young  
ks, young Swedes, Koreans,  
ricans, Argentineans, Britons;  
all the continents of the world  
had come to Paris with their  
packs and their savings from  
time and summer jobs as store



Clockwise from top left, that's Jack Daniel, Jess Motlow, Lem Motlow, Frank Bobo and Jess Gamble. (Jimmy's in the middle.)

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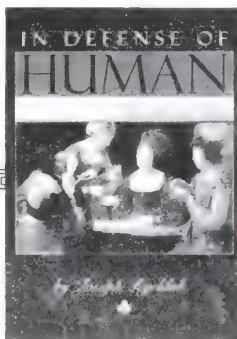




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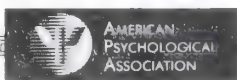
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clerks, apple pickers, temporary secretaries, and messengers. Now they could enjoy the fruits of their labor. They ate little but bread and cheese, stayed four to a room in miserable no-star hotels. Their frugality with money lasted during the day, but at night these young people spent fantastic amounts on drinks in expensive nightclubs and cafés—at night they saw the person with the enchanting smile sitting in the other corner of the room. It was the night they had wept and fasted, wept and prayed for.

Then one day Eibrahim's restaurant vanished. When we went to the café, after being out of the country for some months, we were told by the Arab owner of the room in front that she now owned the whole place. No more masala dosas. But, the new owner also told us, we would find Eibrahim in his apartment, close by, and she gave us the address.

Françoise was with us; she wanted to see him. So we all went to the address and climbed the six flights to the top. We knocked. Eibrahim himself opened the door. He did not recognize us. Then we spoke to him in the few Tamil words we knew and he smiled. "Bonjour," he said, opening the door.

Eibrahim's apartment was very small, very neat. We sat on the same chairs we used to sit on in his café. Françoise leaned forward. "We missed you, my friend. And your dosas."

Eibrahim rose. "I cannot give you dosas here. The woman is gone. But you will have some tea?"

We consented and he went into the kitchen. We all turned, out of habit, to the window, which looked out over a courtyard and blue-gray rooftops, studded with red chimneys standing like sentries. It was very quiet here and none of us said a word, afraid we would say something so inconsequential it would be stupid, when the situation demanded the question we could not ask, could not even think to ourselves in the silences of our own minds: "What are we doing here?"

Eibrahim returned with the tea things on a tray, beautiful inlaid teacups from Vietnam, and he

poured the tea for us. We asked he had closed his restaurant.

"I lost too much money," he solemnly.

We all burst out laughing. It been evident to everybody Eibrahim was a lousy businessman; he undercharged his customers more often than not, he was always giving out free food "from the heart," the prices he charged could barely have covered his costs. He was surprised at our mirth, but then laughed along with us. He confessed "I don't know about restaurants, I wiped out my savings."

He looked so comically despondent that we couldn't stop laughing.

"The Algerian madame of the café was kind. I owed her three months' rent, which she did not collect. She told me I am welcome to come back to her café, but only to play pinball."

We laughed long and hard, wiped the tears from our eyes, sipped the tea.

"So what will you do now?" Françoise asked him.

Eibrahim treated her question with respect. He took his time, he looked up and replied, "I wait. My wife will come here."

He had made his choice. Of the countries in the world he chose to go to, or return to, Eibrahim chose to stay here in this high room in Paris, and wait. We talked to him some more, and then we had to go. But Françoise wanted to stay.

We said goodbye to her and to Eibrahim.

It was January then, and the river stood frozen and we walked against the very blue sky. When we walked, our footsteps echoed on the stone. It was a fine thing to go out very early and warm ourselves with a large bowl of chocolate at the *café tabac*, and watch the tradesmen, the liverymen, and cleaning women come in and get cigarettes, pastries and coffee. Then we turned our attention to the *International Herald Tribune* and read with a pleasant sense of distance about the turn of events back home. Outside the window we could see the stalls being set up for the market on the *place*.



came up to the table and sat opposite. "Un petit noir," he the waiter. "Have you spoken nçoise?" he asked. "She has with Eibrahim for a month. es home to him." Jean did not s if he were happy with this oment.

said nothing; we did not need n had plenty to say for all of is not right, there is some- not right about this. A mar- an . . . with children also. ey are so completely differ- see nothing but sadness. g but sadness to come out of le shook his head, drank his threw a coin down on the and left to go to work. Jean d in the Eighth, and the was a very different district e Fifth, where all of us lived. an could never make sense of erence.

saw Françoise twice that e, first alone and then with m. The first time, a few of us o listen to a Polish choir in e St. Julien. Françoise closed s during the music, swaying

slightly with pleasure as the singers whispered, "Pax, pax, pax," before breaking out into a tremendous "Amen" in time with the organ. She was smiling, and in that light her face was suffused with color; she looked beautiful and fragile, as if she were made of Dresden china.

Afterward, at dinner, she told us, "I didn't think it could happen to me. Really, I am so in love." Again she could not help smiling, but she lifted her hand with the fork still in it to cover her face. Then she looked at us trying to conceal her smile, but we could see it in her eyes. We stopped eating and broke out in laughter. Someone raised his glass and we all clinked, twice, "Chin. Chin."

The second time, Françoise and Eibrahim had dinner at our apartment. He was very grave, and he ate with great decorum. It felt a little strange, we told him, for *us* to be feeding *him*. Our cooking had made the apartment feel quite warm. Through the opened window we could hear the buzzer of the door to the building below, and footsteps in

the courtyard. There was Debussy on the radio and a bouquet of lilies on the table. Françoise and Eibrahim avoided touching each other, but we could sense an intimate connection between them, as if they were really sitting very close. When he spoke, her body would turn toward his.

Françoise had led a proper Sixteenth-Arrondissement life until she fell into our company. She told us about how, when she was growing up, she was ill for a time, and for a month every year she would be sent to St. Honoré-les-Bains to take the waters. Her world was as exotic to us as if she had been raised on the steppes of Mongolia or the streets of Beirut, and we listened with interest. "When I am out of France," she said, "all my thoughts are clearer, I am filled with curiosity, and I can make connections between random events. Even when I am away for very long, exile is tonic for me."

"For me, it is not a matter of choice," said Eibrahim. We all turned toward him. He had finished

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his coffee, and rose from the table and walked over to the window. He was looking out, trying to see beyond the buildings, but the window only opened onto the courtyard and he could see just a little sky. He had his arms stretched out, holding the sides of the open window, his back to us. Françoise got up and went over to him, standing by him in silence, her eyes looking at his face.

He said something to her, very softly, so that only she could hear, and she put her arm up and touched his shoulder. Many worlds met in that gesture, vast distances were shattered. That light touch was more intimate than the most passionate embrace, and all of us, the spectators, felt our hearts breaking. Then they turned back to face us and smiled, both at the same time.

As they left, we presented Eibrahim with the rest of the cake he had so liked, wrapped up in a piece of foil, "from the heart." He looked astonished for a moment, then he got the joke and laughed, very naturally. They went out into the cold, holding hands.

One day in the spring his wife came to him. She called him from the Gare du Nord. When he met her at the station, she had all their children with her, and they looked at Eibrahim with dark, luminous eyes. They stood on the platform for a moment, Eibrahim's wife and children facing him, then he reached out and touched his eldest son on his head. His son stood still. Eibrahim withdrew his hand, and all of them walked down the platform toward the exit.

We did not hear from either Françoise or Eibrahim for a long time after that. Eventually, we became worried about Françoise and decided to drop by her apartment. When she opened the door, we didn't recognize her for a moment, she had lost so much weight. She smelled strongly of cigarettes, and the apartment was filled with a blue haze. The first thing we did upon entering was to open the windows and let in the sun and the air. Françoise sat silently on the sofa,

her head down. For the next hour, we cleaned her rooms thoroughly, washed all the dishes, got the junk off the floor, and rearranged the books and CDs. When the place was more habitable, we poured some wine for Françoise and ourselves, and sat down with her on the sofa. We waited for her to speak. We had time. The afternoon sun came slanting and sneaking into the apartment, coloring our thoughts insidiously. We sipped the wine and looked out of the window at the clouds moving across the sky. The refrigerator motor stopped with a shudder, and we realized that we notice the absence of sound more than we notice sound itself. Silence is tangible; you can run it between your hands like folds of silk.

"You know, he has beautiful eyes," Françoise said. "When he takes off his glasses, he has very beautiful eyes." Then she was crying a little.

There are people who come to Paris and never visit the Louvre or the Eiffel Tower. We were like that. The entire time we stayed in Paris, we went around these two monuments, we looked at them from a distance, we directed visitors to them, but we never went there ourselves. This was not a conscious decision. It was just that . . . these two landmarks were so much *there*. We had heard so much, read so much about them, seen them in so many films, that we felt we had experienced both without being in them. Maybe this is the process of understanding a love that is not yours.

When we left Paris, a little while later, both Françoise and Eibrahim, arriving separately, came to see us off. We were taking the boat train to London from the Gare du Nord. They sat with us for one last coffee at the station café. People waited with their bags at the tables around us, listening to the messages echoing through the station. Some would go on to Belgium and Köln; some had taken the night train from Moscow and were rousing themselves from the journey with a

strong coffee, waiting for theiratives to come and claim their body in this café was there to sign; we were all in transit. Morning newspapers were filling the racks in front of the *tabac*, urgent messages from all over the world.

When the waiter brought our fees, Eibrahim's head dropped. Françoise understood immediately and gave the waiter a fifty-franc note for all of us.

"When do you come to again?" she asked us. The situation seemed so normal, all of us sitting around a table talking as if nothing had changed, as if it were the previous summer. And, in fact, Eibrahim's former restaurant was no more than a minutes' walk from where we were sitting; we could all so easily go there, forget everything, and go down to a meal of *dosas* and a couple of beers.

We let Françoise's question lie at the table between us; we could not answer it. And she knew that immediately after asking it she leaned back in her chair. She made her effort. Now she was tired.

"I have a little present for you," said Eibrahim. He reached for his jacket and came out with a small package badly wrapped in a red and green paper that had "Joyeux Noël" written all over it.

The little present was a heart, is, a clear plastic model of the human heart, showing, in different colors, all the multiple arteries, ventricles, chambers, and valves. Accompanying it was a little booklet titled "Illustrated Heart," which explained in scientific detail the parts of the heart and their functions. As Eibrahim held the heart, and all of us looked closely at it, it seemed almost to throb with life.

"It is such a complicated thing, the heart," explained Eibrahim.

"No, it is not," said Françoise. "To me it is very simple." She was not looking at anybody, but her palms were open on her lap as if they were a book and she was trying hard to read what was written there. Or maybe she was just trying very hard not to show us her eyes.



ere was a vast silence, shadows  
en the seconds. Everything—  
estions, answers, and possibili-  
was suspended. Then Eibrahim  
d forward and gently covered  
oise's palms with his.

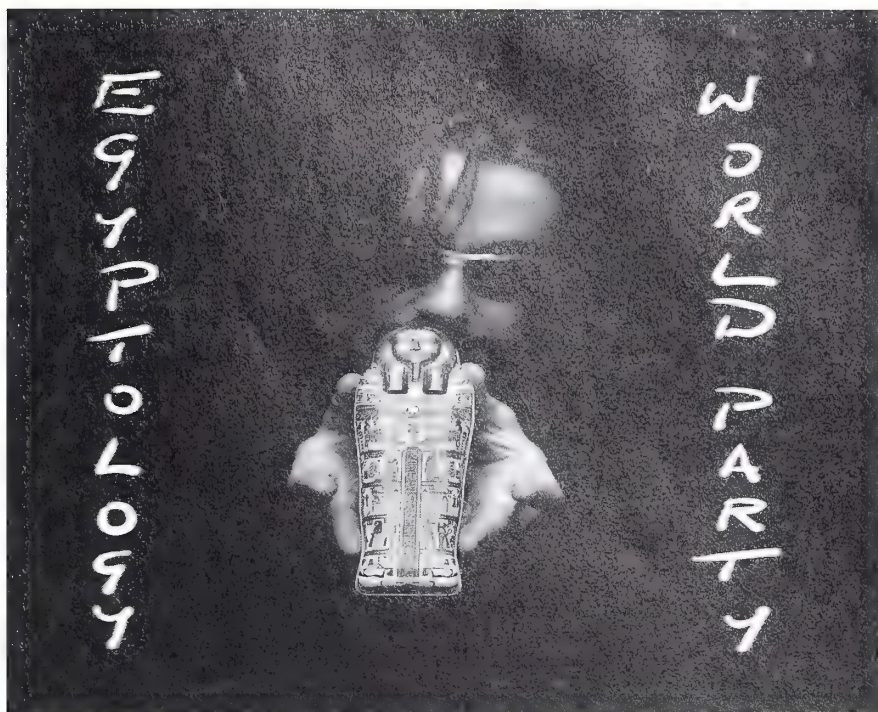
r train was called and we stood  
leave.

was cloudy, threatening to rain.  
minutes out of the station the  
slowed, then stopped altogether—  
the desolation. All around us  
housing projects. Brown faces  
d out at us from some of the  
ows. The faces stared at us  
out moving, looking at the  
d train.

en, summoning up some last re-  
of will from the depths of its  
, the train lurched forward, and  
ere once again on our way. ■

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# THE INHUMANITY OF THE ANIMAL PEOPLE

Do creatures have the same rights that we do?

By Joy Williams

**S**t. Francis once converted a wolf to reason. The wolf of Gubbio promised to stop terrorizing an Italian town; he made pledges and assurances and pacts, and he kept his part of the bargains. But St. Francis only performed this miracle once, and as miracles go, it didn't seem to capture the public's fancy. Humans don't want to enter into a pact with animals. They don't want animals to reason. It would be an unnerving experience. It would bring about all manner of awkwardness and guilt. It would make our treatment of them seem, well, unreasonable. The fact that animals are voiceless is a relief to us, it frees us from feeling much empathy or sorrow. If animals did have voices, if they could speak with the tongues of angels—at the very least with the tongues of angels—it is unlikely that they could save themselves from mankind. Their mysterious otherness has not saved them, nor have their beautiful songs and coats and skins and shells, nor have their strengths,

*Joy Williams is a short-story writer, essayist, and novelist. Her story "Honored Guest" appeared in the June 1994 issue of Harper's Magazine.*



their skills, their swiftness, the beauty of their flights. We discover the remarkable intelligence of the whale, the wolf, the elephant—it does not save them, nor does our awareness of the complexity of their lives. It matters not, it seems, whether they nurse their young or brood patiently on eggs. If they eat meat, we decry their viciousness; if

they eat grasses and seeds, we dismiss them as weak. We know that they care for their young and teach them, that they play and grieve, that they have memories and a sense of the future for which they sometimes plan. We know about their habits, their migrations, that they have a sense of home, of finding their way, seeking, returning to home. We know that when they face death, they fear it. We know all these things and yet we have not saved them from us.

Anything that is animal, that is not *us*, can be slaughtered as a pest or sucked dry as a memento or reduced to a trophy or eaten, eaten, eaten. We eat for reasons of need or preference or availability. Or it's culture, a way to feed the poor, it's a sign of power, it's plentiful, it's plentiful, which makes it more intriguing, it arouses the palate. It amuses the palate, it makes your dinner bigger, it's healthy, it's somebody's way of life, it's somebody's livelihood, it's somebody's business.

Agriculture has become agribusiness, after all. So the creatures that have been under our "stewardship" for the longest, that have been codified as a habit for our use, that have always been offered a special place in our regard—



imals—have never been as cruel or confined or slaughtered in numbers in all of history. Aldo D, in his naturalist classic *A Country Almanac*, argues that animals and domesticated animals have different moral statuses—wild animals are not free and are unworthy of our regard. Moral textbooks instruct that we have no duties of justice or charity toward animals; our only duties concerning them are the proper use we make of them. But large-scale corporate businesses, enjoying fat federal subsidies, don't need to have their profits defended by effete ethical rationalizations. Factory farmers are all business. Animals are no more than machines—milk machines, piglet machines, egg machines—production units converting themselves into profit. They are explicitly excluded from the protection offered by the federal Animal Welfare Act, an act that is weak and lightly enforced, if at all. The Department of Agriculture: "any agricultural operation" precludes "humane" treatment, and anti-cruelty laws do not apply to that which is done for food.

A factory farm today is a crowded, filthy bedlam, filled with suffering animals that are quite literally insane, drenched with pesticides and fattened on a diet of growth stimulants, antibiotics, and drugs. Two hundred and fifty laying hens are confined within a single building. (The high mortality rate caused by overcrowding is medically acceptable; nothing is more worthless than an individual hen.) Pigs are raised in bare cages in windowless metal buildings, tightly restrained in foul pens and gestation boxes. Cows are kept in pens to produce an abnormal amount of milk, which is further artificially increased with hormone injections. The by-products of the dairy industry, calves, are chained in crates only two inches wide and no longer than their bodies, and raised on a diet of sugar-laced liquid feed for a few weeks until they're slaughtered for "premium" veal. (Yet some people will tell, apparently they're raised in the open, in crates or something, but the veal is creamy, sort of refined, a very nice . . .) People will stop eating veal

only if they think they will get a killer disease if they don't. In England, the beef industry had a setback when a link was found between bovine spongiform encephalopathy, a fatal disease of cattle, and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, a fatal neurological virus in humans. The cows became ill because they were fed the rendered remains of sick sheep. Of course, in this country we are assured that our cows aren't being fed sick sheep and that no BSE-infected cattle have been found here. We do have many "downer" animals, though, about 100,000 of them a year, that collapse from stress or something, heaven knows, and end up dead prior to the slaughtering process. They are rendered and ground up and become pet food and animal feed. Cattle do eat cattle here. They are fed the ground offal of those that have succumbed to unknown causes, and this has been the practice for many years. If BSE were ever confirmed in this country, which is not at all unlikely, people would stop eating meat for a while for the same reasons the English did. Not because they'd had a sudden telepathic vision of the horrors of the abattoir, or because they'd all been subjected to a reading of James Agee's remarkable fable about a Christlike steer, "A Mother's Tale," but because they thought that eating steak would make their brains go funny. Once assured by the government that there was no need for alarm, they would be back in the spotless supermarkets, making their selections among the sliced, cubed, and shrink-wrapped remains, which have borne no resemblance to living things in our minds for some time now. They are merely some things, in a different department from the toilet-bowl cleanser. The supermarket has never been a place where one thinks—Animal.

Now genetic manipulation is becoming a commonplace as well. One of the problems in poultry production is that bacteria-laden feces fly all over the carcasses in the slaughtering process. It's just always been a problem. Awaiting government approval is a proposed product called Rectite, a sort of superglue that seals the rectal cavities of poultry so all that salmonella contamination can be avoided.

But Rectite already sounds a little old-fashioned. Genetic engineers might want to create a turkey, say, that had no vent at all, possibly no feet, and even a smaller head to save space. This would likely be hailed as quite an advantage over the traditionally constructed bird. Researchers probably dream about this nightly (when they're not dreaming about genetically identical sheep). Researchers are, in fact, creating entire new orders of creatures—specifically designed, transgenic, xenograph-ready. Around the world in labs with names such as Genpharm International Inc., Genzyme Corporation, and Pharmaceutical Proteins, biotechnocrats are inserting human genes in livestock to form animals that can produce human proteins and hormones: drugstores on the hoof. Pigs, long attractive to the farmer, not because of any Babe- or Miss Piggy-like charm but because they have short pregnancies and big litters, have become a favorite of researchers who are altering them to make the perfect organ donors. Doctors, awaiting the eventual blessing of the FDA, are eagerly anticipating placing genetically altered pig livers in just about everybody. (The drunks will probably get them to start.) Humans are requiring and demanding fresh new organs all the time (employing animals in this way seems so much more sophisticated than merely eating them), and the ethics of raising or breeding animals for body parts to replace our own failing ones seem to give people pause only when combined with warnings of dangers to human health. A person might not want that little monkey's heart, not because he wanted the monkey to keep it but because he'd worry that he might contract the Ebola virus and that his skin would get pulpy, he'd vomit black blood, and his eyeballs would burst.

We distance ourselves more and more from animals as we use them in increasingly bizarre ways. Animals are being subsumed in a weird unnaturalness. Indeed, technology, which is forever pressing to remove animals from nature, to muddy and morph the remaining integrity of the animal kingdom, has rendered the word "natural" obsolete. A side benefit of the new and developing technologies is that soon we won't have to feel guilty about the



suffering and denigration of the animals because we will have *made them up*. (That's not an animal, it's a donor ...) Any sentience they possess will have been invented by man or eliminated altogether. An animal will have no more real "life" than a lightbulb.

In the laboratory, animals have already been reclassified. They are tools, they're part of the scientific apparatus, they undergo transformations, they are metamorphosed into data. Rats and mice are already excluded from the very definition of "animal" by the Department of Agriculture. The offspring of these un-animals are then genetically reinvented. There are countless variations of mutant "knock-out" mice, creatures whose genetic code has been grotesquely altered, who lack particular genes crucial to learning or to instinctual behavior and self-destruct in novel ways, or who develop terrible diseases or deformities. As for the cats and dogs and rabbits and primates other than man in the laboratory, although not deemed un-animals, they are transformed semantically into "research animals." These animals, like "food" animals, qualify for very little protection under the Animal Welfare Act. At present this act does not prohibit any experiment or procedure that might be performed on animals in labs, and makes clear that the government cannot interfere with the conduct or design of any experiment. Blinding has long been a popular procedure in the lab, as are any and all "depravity" studies. Of endless interest is the study of an animal's reaction to unrelieved, inescapable pain. The procedures, of course, are never cruelty but science—they may result in data that might be of some use to us sometime. So dogs are decerebrated or mutilated or poisoned or burned to provide grist for a learned thesis; other dogs are tormented into states of trauma, into states of "learned helplessness," into "psychological death," to see if their observed decline can give any insights into human depression. Some experiments merely satisfy scientific "curiosity." (*Wow, this stuff took that puppy's skin right down to the bone. I wonder if it will take the rust off the lawn furniture with no mess.*) Other experiments serve to confirm prior conclusions—to verify previously known LD (lethal dose) levels, for ex-

ample. LD tests, used by industry to determine the toxicity of floor waxes and detergents, end when half the animals in a test group die. Animals never leave laboratories. They keep undergoing more and more corrosive tests until they expire, or until their bodies, unable to provide even the most utterly senseless data, are "humanely destroyed."

**B**ut dogs and cats and rabbits are as nothing to the researcher when compared with what can be extrapolated from the most desirable lab animal of them all—the chimpanzee. The chimpanzee, humankind's closest relative, has been infected and maimed and killed for over fifty years now, for us, for the possible advantage to us, because they're so much like us; they possess 98 percent of the same DNA, the same genetic material, as humans. That missing 2 percent allows them to be vivisectioned on our behalf. If it weren't for that lucky-for-us 2, they wouldn't be able to be used as experimental surrogates because they'd be *just* like us, and medical advancement would come to a standstill. Or at best it would, in the words of a doctor writing in *The New Physician*, slow to a "snail's pace."

So in our country's finest universities (as well as in some of our just so-so ones), researchers, not to be likened to snails, are still making chimpanzees "hot" with deadly diseases and screwing bolts into their heads. They're still removing infants from their mothers and "containerizing" them in solitary so that their psychological and emotional suffering and decline can be observed. They're still performing cataract surgery on healthy chimps, then giving them different rehabilitative treatments, then killing them and dissecting their brains to see which treatment produced the best result within the visual cortex. And they're still trying to give chimps AIDS. Scientists have been frustrated because chimps just won't get this disease, though their own simian immune systems can be destroyed in the lab. Over 100 chimps have been dosed with the human AIDS virus, but none have developed human AIDS. In 1995, researchers from the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center at

Emory University in Atlanta were to announce that one chimpanzee had come down with AIDS, or, had come down with the opportunistic diseases associated with AIDS. Managing to give one chimpanzee symptoms of AIDS was certainly science's finest hour.

In any case, what is all this "research" for? Artificially induced diseases in animals practically never lead to a cure that can be applicable to humans. Even scientists have begun to recognize the ambiguity of the results to the extent that it is commonplace after the announcement of a discovery wrung from animal research for the researchers to caution against using the findings to draw conclusions about human behavior. Still, researchers work in public relations. Parents' terror of mysterious sudden infant death syndrome were manipulated sharply with the *cure dependent upon research* mantra—until the plotous recent drop in infant deaths attributed to the simple act of putting babies to bed on their backs instead of on their stomachs. (Prevention is worth a pound of cure, but it is something the drug companies are not interested in.) Misleading monkey experiments delayed an effective vaccine for decades. (As for its use in the cancer problem, 46 percent of substances deemed carcinogenic in mice are found not to be carcinogenic in rats.) Successes in human heart transplants, blood transfusion, heart-bypass surgery all resulted when doctors ignored the baleful results of experiments on dogs and human material. Animal tests, it does not predict side effects in humans to 52 percent of the time. Guinea pigs die when injected with penicillin. Thalidomide was found safe for rodents so was Open, an arthritis drug that caused fatal liver toxicity in a number of human patients before it was pulled off the market. Animals are sacrificed in laboratories to show the safety of products too; they are not all employed to test the dangerous side effects. The tobacco industry was able to delay a link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer for decades because of thousands of dogs, monkeys, rats,



...s, fitted with masks and placed  
...oking chambers," or immobi-  
...n stereotaxic chairs with tubes  
...g smoke down their windpipes,  
... could not be encouraged to  
...develop carcinomas.

*The horror! The horror!* if I may be  
...as to quote Conrad.

...most people believe they like  
...s, are kind to them, and, by ac-  
...g any new "uses" that can be  
...for them, have sensible attitudes  
...ing them. *Normal* people are  
...f animals and disapprove of wan-  
...uelty, but keep their priorities  
...er. That is, they seem to want to  
...der to animals even as they con-  
...o use them and eat them and ex-  
...tem to relocate themselves when  
...ie to build a vacation home. But  
...ertainly don't want to run the  
...being denigrated as *animal people*  
...arding animals too highly or car-  
...o much.

...en a dog was found bound and  
...d with electrical cord and set on  
...Miami in April 1996, people  
...outed money to a reward fund for  
...prehension of his killer. A few  
...contributing a little money  
...have been normal, but hun-  
...of people contributed a consid-  
...amount of money, which made  
...peculiar, which made them an-  
...people. The *Miami Herald* was  
...d: "[The collected money] ex-  
...the \$11,000 offered by law en-  
...ment agencies for the capture of  
...al killer who beats and burns  
...less women in Miami."

...en a seventeen-year-old with  
...r wanted to go to Alaska and kill  
...iak bear, and was sent to do just  
...hanks to the generosity of the  
...-A-Wish Foundation, it set off  
...the papers referred to as an "an-  
...rights furor." The extent of that  
...caused others to be more "objec-  
...about the situation, saying things  
...-ey, it'll make the poor kid happy,  
...s something he can do with his dad.  
...en boys on a high school team in  
...battered a cat with their baseball  
...put it in a bag, and ran over it  
...their pickup truck, killing it, be-  
...it had taken to hanging around  
...oiling the pitcher's mound, the  
...al people were outraged and de-  
...ed that the players be kicked off

the team. Such intense disapproval  
..."bewildered" the youths and caused a  
...backlash. *We all did things to cats when  
...we were young. This is just ridiculous.  
...Some people think a cat is more important  
...than a boy.* Although such arguments  
...are not up to the debating dazzle, say,  
...of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, a  
...humanist argument in any form de-  
...fends normal thinking against the mis-  
...anthropic nuts—the animal people or,  
...worst of all, *the animal-rights people*—  
...who seek to question it.

"A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy," the  
...statement made by People for the Eth-

ical Treatment of Animals (PETA)  
...some years ago, has been used with  
...considerable success to discredit the  
...animal-rights movement (though a rat  
...does seem to be a boy when it suits  
...science's purposes). PETA's actual re-  
...mark was, "When it comes to having  
...a nervous system and the ability to feel  
...pain, hunger, and thirst, a rat is a pig  
...is a dog is a boy." Even addressing the  
...statement as intended has resulted in  
...a not so edifying debate about suffer-  
...ing. Do animals suffer or don't they?  
...And if they do (they certainly seem  
...to), does that *ability*, rather than the

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ability to speak or reason, give them the rights of life, liberty, and freedom from torture? "Rights" has become practically the only ethical language we speak in this country, and to the animal-rights activist, it means *equal consideration of interests*. But to normal people, rights for animals is ridiculous, and much merriment is had by placing the concept in the most ludicrous light possible. What kind of rights exactly? The right to vote? The right to a good education? The right of a doggy not to be nuzzled at the vet's? Not only are the animal-rights people considered annoying because of their boycotts and protests and extremely politically incorrect use of Holocaust and slavery references regarding the status of animals; they're considered antihuman, even monstrous, in their misguidedness. (Hitler was a vegetarian, you know, and he adored his German shepherds.) An animal-rights activist is perceived to be the kind of person who would sneak into a school cafeteria and whisper to the innocent, impressionable children there, *You know that sandwich Mommy packed for you? Well, I know you love your mommy very much, but you know that substance in your sandwich once had a mommy and a life too, and it wanted to live that life just as much as you want to live yours.*

The animal-rights people are widely thought to be—well, crazy.

**T**here are thousands of animal-advocacy organizations in the United States, with millions of members. Feral cats, wild horses, greyhounds, fowls, bats, as well as the more dramatic gorillas, pandas, and dolphins, all have their devoted protectors, and various methods are used to win public sympathy for them. But many advocates are working for the humane treatment of animals and would prefer not to argue the rights issue at all. To argue that an animal has the right not to have its arms cut off in an experiment is far different than arguing that a pig should be treated more kindly before being converted into a Heavenly Ham. It is one thing to show up as a carrot at the country fair, toting a placard that reads "Eat Your Veggies, Not Your Friends," and quite another to find a convincing language with an ir-

refutable philosophical base for the concept of animal dignity. It's easier to have a yard sale to benefit your local wildlife rehabilitation center than to wade into real rights talk and tempt flake status. An animal-welfare advocate can feel quietly victorious convincing someone to adopt a pet from the pound rather than buy one from a pet store, but a rights person is always plunging into the eschatological dark. ("You actually believe that animals have souls?" "Yes, I do. I do believe that. Their natures are their souls.")

Welfare groups have been laboring on behalf of the animals for some time—the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the American Anti-Vivisection Society are both over a hundred years old—but the rights movement took off only in 1973, when *The New York Review of Books* published an unsolicited review of a book about animals, men, and morals. The reviewer was the Australian philosopher Peter Singer, who quickly expanded his article into the rights bible, *Animal Liberation*. PETA, founded by Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco in 1980, is the group that perhaps best personifies the rights movement, because it broke tactical ground in 1981 with a daring legal action that attempted to prosecute a researcher for animal cruelty. Pacheco volunteered as an assistant to a Dr. Edward Taub at the Institute of Behavioral Research in Silver Spring, Maryland, with the intention of secretly documenting conditions in an "ordinary" lab. Taub had been surgically crippling primates to monitor the rehabilitation of impaired limbs for many years, apparently suspending his efforts only long enough to write proposals for federal grants that would, and did, allow him to continue his labors. Pacheco and PETA got a precedent-setting search warrant from a circuit judge, and police raided the filthy lab and confiscated seventeen monkeys, as well as Taub's files and a monkey's severed hand that the less than charismatic researcher kept on his desk as a paperweight. Although the rights of the mutilated primates could not be argued, as those rights had never been established, Taub was found guilty by a jury of cruelty to animals. The conviction was overturned on appeal when

the court ruled that state statutes did not apply to research conducted under a federal program. Taub, supporter of the animal-experimentation industry, seemed to have unlimited funds for defense at his disposal. Still, PETA's persistence and style brought publicity and respect for animal advocacy.

Today, pharmaceutical companies, agribusinesses, the National Association for Biomedical Research, and the American Medical Association—groups which have only our best interests at heart—revile as extremists such groups as PETA, Last Chance for Animals, Friends of Animals, and the Animal Liberation Front. These rights groups can argue rights with all solemnity, but prefer vivid direct action. After a letter-writing campaign and a touristic boycott led by the Fund for Animals, with no impression on the governor of Alaska, the group was assisted by Friends of Animals, which aired, on national television, an undercover video of ALF officials tirelessly exterminating wildlife. The ALF breaks into labs, dismantles equipment, and frees animals, with great notoriety and accusations of terrorism, but its raids often provide irrefutable proof of researchers' barbarism. The ALF stole films from the University of Pennsylvania's heart surgery lab that showed baboons in getting their heads smashed when researchers chortled. The National Institutes of Health had called the Pennsylvania lab "one of the best in the world," but the federal government cut off funding after the improper film was made public. (What does the Animal Rights Direct Action Coalition do to relax? They drive a McDonald's in a pickup truck with a dead cow in the back and a sign reading, "Here's Your Lunch.")

Moderates in the movement—ones who have struggled quietly to reform—are tolerated by society as long as they can be considered harmless gooders. Activists, of course, put public toleration at risk. But even moderate groups are taking responsibility for more meaningful ethics regarding animals. The Humane Society of the United States, founded in 1954, has five million members and is considered a reasonable group working in a safer way within the system, lobbying governments and promoting ballot



n behalf of the animals. Still, the HSUS studiously avoids ants language, its position that should not be treated more than humans is a view quite binary in its implications. It is, a rights position, an animal-tremist position.

controversies and organizationalicking, the animal people op thinking about animals. y never stop thinking about they can make the rest of us out animals, for we've grown comfortable with animals' from our lives. (If we don't em, we absorb them.) The people are vegetarians. etter be if they don't want cused of being hypocritical. rse, by not being hypocriti-y can be accused of being teous.) But people don't adm overmuch for living light-e planet, and their "Meat Is chirping seems to be an irri-at up there with a leaf blower ski. Their wishful hope that r example animals will be nd the slaughterhouses will at is dismissed as absurd, be-an average day in America, cattle, 7,000 calves, 360,000 ad 24 million chickens are nd you can't just shut down like that overnight. Besides, iment goes, a vegetarian, un-is a zealot, practically a Jain, ble in the death of animals e moment he wakes up in the g. Modern slaughterhouses use for everything but the the cluck, and the moo, as pokesmen like to say. As well g turned into the more obvi-as, shoes, wallets, and "tough ckets and skirts, animals are grified into antiaging creams e and paint and antifreeze. —benign gelatin, formerly as hooves—constitutes Jell-urse, and is also in ice cream e increasing number of "fat oducts we consume. Animals ed into all manner of drugs, nhancers, and mood stabiliz-marlin, an estrogen drug for usual women, comes from the f pregnant mares. This is a new industry that results in

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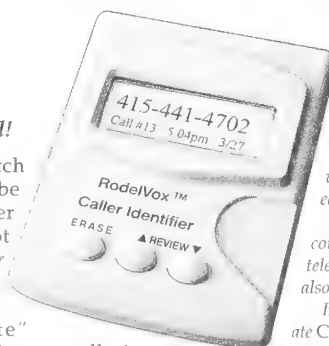
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the births of approximately 75,000 unwanted foals each year. Off to the slaughterhouse the little ones go, to be turned into . . . something else. Animals are everywhere in our lives; we just can't look into their eyes. We'd prefer not to think about their eyes at all, actually.

Vegetarians do their best, but they seem to lack influence. A recent article in *The New York Times Magazine* marveled over a meeting between environmentalists and ranchers that took place at a steakhouse in Orofino, Idaho, a restaurant described as "a shrine to red meat and raw timber." As the two groups "sparked and joked over steak," they realized they had a great deal in common. They both wanted wolves, grizzlies, and open spaces. They forged a new and potentially powerful bond as they literally chewed the fat. A vegetarian could never come to such an understanding with the Big Dogs. Never! (Particularly if he tried to break the ice with George Bernard Shaw's witticism that "meat eating is cannibalism with the heroic dish omitted.") The ranchers and environmentalists together would throw him out on his ass into the parking lot.)

The animal people have never been embraced by the increasingly corporate environmental community. Mainstream enviro groups, with their compromises and retreats, have lost the moral background on the American scene in less than thirty years. They've become ecowimps. Even the far from ecowimpy Earth First! has never entangled itself in the briar patch that is animal rights. To this group, farm animals *are* the problem. *Shoot Cows Not Bears*, Earth First! exhorts in its Dada way. As for the environmental philosophers, the Deep Ecologists, they have never fully acknowledged the reality of the animals, preferring to deal in the abstractions of biodiversity and species instead. Although they call for a less human-centered ethic, our ugly and troubled relationship with the non-human animal is a problem they do not care to address.

Only the animal people struggle to address this problem, and there is no limit to the horrible things they can worry about or the disappointments they must endure. Public awareness

and revulsion at our treatment of animals is often raised only to fade or be circumvented. Two successes for the movement involved the fur and cosmetics industries. The wearing of fur was discredited for a time through the tactic of howling insult. "Corpse Coat!" activists would scream at any opportunity, or they would solicitously ask of some fur wearer, "How did you get the blood off that?" Then they'd go out and paint "Shame" and "Death" all over furriers' windows. Most cosmetics companies eliminated animal testing after the word got out to the kids (*Mommy, is it true that they blinded hundreds of white bunnies to make this pretty soap?*) and consumers were organized to boycott. But the fur industry is still around, hoping for government subsidies to boost export sales and counting on a new wave of designers—there's always a new wave—who believe the trend gurus' predictions of a "fur renaissance fueled by a growing interest in luxury investments" and are churning out the beaver capes, the burgundy pony-skin jackets, and the acid-green sable barn jackets. And some of the big names in the beauty industry—Helene Curtis, Chesebrough-Pond's—continue to test on animals. Overall, the use of animals in research could very well be increasing—who knows? Corporate monoliths such as Procter & Gamble and Bausch & Lomb never stopped animal testing; the Department of Defense could still be cutting the vocal cords of beagles and testing nerve gas on them. The DOD doesn't have to release any figures at all, and research facilities in general enjoy institutionalized secrecy and seldom have to provide real numbers to the public.

No, there's little cause for real happiness among the animal people and scant opportunity for self-congratulation. Commercial whaling has never really been outlawed, trade in exotic species is brisk, trophy hunting is back. Whenever a victory is claimed for the animals, it doesn't stay a victory for long: it's either not definitive or it's superseded by something worse. Cases continue to be won only to be lost on appeal, and the cases that remain won involve animal cruelty or welfare, never the rights of an animal to an equal consideration of interests, for an animal has no standing in a court of law.

Injuries to a person's "aesthetics" can be judicially recognized as *being offended by seeing spots mounted on the hoods of logging trucks*, but an animal's interest in continuing to exist cannot.

The animal people need the court on the rights issue, and such as the Animal Legal Defense Fund are seeking to find, try, the perfect case—the case to take animals out of the realm of property and grant them legal status of their own. The plaintiff will undoubtedly be a chimp. The chimpanzees to be trained in sign language to express their fears and could provide the scientific basis for the argument that they deserve the same freedom from enslavement that humans now enjoy. Peter Singer's best philosophical effort is the Ape Project, a rhetorical demand for the extension of the "community of equals" to include all the great human beings and "our disquieting doubles"—chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans. The rights of life and freedom from torture and imprisonment would be granted to these animals; then, possibly, would trickle down to those that are less disquieting doubles.

Sometimes a number of animal people gather together, as they did last year for a "World Conference" at the cavernous USAir Armory in Landover, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C. The armory holds 18,000 people and it was far from full. There were no love animals there, of course. Animals are never called upon to do anything on the movement's behalf that would be using the animals. Only people were there, and about 3,000 of them. The atmosphere, so vast and impersonal, so concertingly inert, seemed to emphasize the gargantuan task that the group had taken on, and the specter of hopeless helplessness appeared more than once. Unbearably wretched images were projected on immense screens: gruesome videos of steel leg-hold traps snapping off and nailing a remarkable animal creature, videos of moribund



and terrified stockyard animals, of berserk zoo and circus animal being shot. The animal people are intently watching, watching simulator, avian and equine horror, dog and puppy-mill and pound—witnessing things a normal person would never want to know.

There were three days of classes. The speakers were impassioned but calm, well-spoken, well-prepared; they politely defended themselves to the time allocated.

Nobody screamed, "We've stopped dressing up as carrots!" whose idea was it to petition the town of Fishkill to change its name. It made us look like morons!"

The importance of unity was stressed, the importance of being treated as a single-interest political group that could effect change. In speeches, people would

point out to the encircling satellite and line up for the beyond-vegeto-dairy vegan food that the concessionaires were serving with a certain amount of puzzle.

The Franks A Lot stand was mysteriously shuttered. On the fourth day was a March for Animals, from the Hippo up Constitution Avenue to the Capitol. It was a nice march,

and bystanders seemed a little more sympathetic by it. Perhaps because there were no animals.

After the march, the animal people came home—to continue to work, to work for the animals so that they would be saved from our barbarism.

My primarily middle-class group from a country ever had such an explicit agenda, based utterly on non-environmental and non-self-interest?

Animal people are calling for a change in attitude toward a great and mysterious and mute nation, which can't, without stern reckoning, act morally.

Their quest is quixotic; their reactions, assailable; their intentions, articulating. The implementation of their vision would seem

impossible. But the future world is not inevitable. Our treatment of animals and our attitude toward them is crucial not to any pretensions we have to moral behavior but to humankind's actual and moral evolution. The question is how the human animal is going to evolve, isn't it?

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NOTES FOR "SPORTS PAGE" Notes: Words in parentheses indicate the junctures of the three clues in each "item." Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (\*).

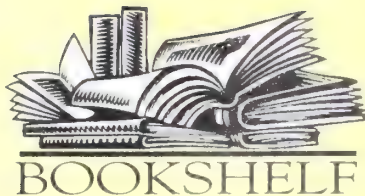
CLUES: ACROSS: 5. he-ar-se (rear/to); re-flex (unconscious/energy); r-ene(rgy)-(sta)ge; far-O (space/to); moor (rev.) (room/funny); gags (two mngs.); 8. s(t)ere-O (ring/article); a-r(is)e-n. (is/to); murder (rev.); 10. has-ten (speed/mean); s(coring)-(ad)-is-t(eam) (starter/comparatively); Gorier (pun); 11. bass-O (nothing/signed); in-Ked (perhaps/initially); guav\*-A(didas); 13. stop(rev.) (bowls/something); lamp(in) (dropping/held); r-a-pt.; 14. pal\*-e(ntries) (entrants/contended); vied\* (marked/out); e(v)ery. DOWN: 1. pro's-theses (leg/to); thumb-S.crew (finger/a); triangular\*; 2. Ram-rod (shots/stirred); if-fier\* (certain/California); Angels\*; 3. ye(a-r)s (certainly/wear); c(rod)e (shaft/pointing); p(ointing)-lasm\*; 4. terr(it)-or-Y. (arcal/rang); resounded\* (underdoes/speed); ex-one-rate; 6. rut-A.(bag)A. (athletic/contract); straiten (homophone) (right/a); arrogate (Arrowgate); 9. Devil(rev.)-s (second/class); (p)ass-ort (dropping/below); peew(rev.)-(w)ee(k); 12. (p)aper(s) (papers/big); nova (two mngs.) (lo/x/non-starter), (t)umps.

SOLUTION TO JULY DOUBLE ACROSTIC (NO. 175). ANNE RIVERS SIDONS: UP ISLAND. The family. They were not the first to make living, breathing individuals fit into the... cage of an abstraction. Ozzie and Harriet and Leave it to Beaver probably defined family for half the baby-boomers, but it is my own family... that is... clearest to me.

CONTEST RULES: Send the quotation, the name of the author, and the title of the work, together with your name and address, to Double Acrostic No. 176, *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by August 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. The solution will be printed in the September issue. Winners of the June Double Acrostic (No. 174) are Kathleen H. Fox, Niceville, Florida; Arthur L. Draper, Bowling Green, Kentucky; and James Madden, Northampton, Massachusetts.

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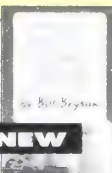
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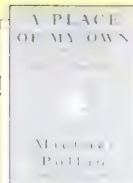
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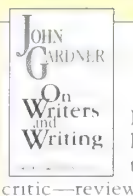
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# ABOARD THE GRAVY TRAIN

In Kazakhstan, the farce that is U.S. foreign aid

By Matt Bivens



ina Timofeyeva, the  
ced Russian woman  
n the St. Petersburg  
tate agency Poisk  
ch"), sat behind her  
noring my accusations  
ting her fingernails. As  
ipping fell, she blew on  
ing it skittering across  
ktop. Some fell onto  
y linoleum floor, others  
y lap.  
not going to talk to you  
re about the money,"  
I finally. "From now on,  
k to the Boys."  
money referred to was  
parently irretrievable  
that my wife, Svet-  
nd I had given Nina as  
payment on an apart-  
The Boys were the un-  
it crew-cut thugs who worked  
r. Or maybe she worked for  
such things are hard to deter-  
My wife and I had long want-  
buy a modest St. Petersburg  
ent, and in the late summer  
we had borrowed money and

signed an agreement with Poisk. A few days later, Svetlana was summoned to Poisk for what she thought was a routine meeting—something to do with the documentation of our apartment purchase—and instead found herself alone in a tiny room with six large men—the Boys—who reminded her that they knew where we lived and where her parents lived, then demanded that she hand

over another \$7,500 or lose both the apartment and the original \$7,500.

Svetlana went into hiding at her parents' summer cottage while I sought the U.S. consulate's advice on how to deal with the situation. That advice boiled down to two possible scenarios:

(a) I forget about the \$7,500; or

(b) I buy a gun, hire a bodyguard, check into a hotel, and then—and only then—call the police.

Scenario (b) would probably unfold as follows: The cops would kick in the door at Poisk, club the Boys into submission, and demand back my \$7,500. Then the cops would summon me to the precinct, where they would return, oh, say, \$2,000 of our money. Then the Boys would pay me a visit.

Neither scenario appealed, so the advice I took in the end was Nina's: I talked to the Boys. Which is to say, I performed for them. I played—convincingly, I thought—the dumb foreigner, so naive that he just might pose some heretofore unthought-of

Bivens is the editor of the St. Petersburg in Russia. This is his first article for S Magazine.



thrust at it, then in question time it turned to concerns of the "and" portion of the *For the People* time. I dropped the name "Boris" but kept and kept talking. I found that the U.S. companies were mostly aware of the situation, and would not step after me, not at any time.

—on the spot, only one of them, that is, the one that was aware of the situation. It was not with the trouble either to kill me, not to harm me. But in the first, it was a thing came up with a sense of a sense, and a feeling, and I found it was the idea that we would never see the money again. We sensed that we had come to the end of that happy period, which is a couple of lines, comfortably on the most income of a freelance journalist. How we needed money.

—so I turned to the Dark side of the Force. I applied for a job in public relation.

I had heard of an opening in Alameda, California with the New York Times. But on Marsteller, the world's largest public relations agency, and although I once would have scoffed at the idea of working in P.R., I quickly convinced myself that the position would be different. Burson Marsteller was working under a contract from AID, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and this meant that I would be helping the Kazakhstani, not selling for some corporation.

In Kazakhstan, throughout the Soviet Union on the day in 1991 that it collapsed, the government owned everything—not only the telephone system, but the factories, but every barber shop, every restaurant, every bakery. And to under score this fact, businesses did not even have names, not number.

Bakery No. 1, Bakery No. 2, and on. The government of newly independent Kazakhstan vowed to put these concerns back into private hands, and the United States, AID, came to help. AID contracted corporations, such as Ernst & Young, and Deloitte & Touche to offer economic and legal advice on how exactly, the idea about privatization, in other words, and a bright idea Burson Marsteller, well. A deal, it was

in part, it was a chance program in Kazakhstan published by AID in 1994. Burson Marsteller's task was to create that "the Kazakhstan understood the privatization process, and participate actively in it. In other words, Burson Marsteller was to sell the notion of free market capitalism to the people of Kazakhstan. That meant proper privatization TV commercials, newspaper ads, and press conferences, it meant developing a logo, a gallop, a "privatization" and plotting it on billboard, and city buses, it meant courting the local press, it meant keeping people informed about how to buy shares in corporations, and when the auctions would be held for barber shops and bakeries.

I knew nothing of P.R., and little of privatization. But I was an American, I spoke good Russian, and I was willing to leave St. Petersburg on short notice. A single phone call to Burson Marsteller's Washington, D.C., office landed me the job.

The next day Nina and the Boys paid me back, minus \$250 for their "services."

With the money returned, the pressure to leave journalism was off, and I thought briefly about turning down the P.R. job. But there was really no turning back now; Burson Marsteller had made me an offer I couldn't refuse. \$53,018 a year after taxes, insurance benefits, free housing, a driver, a maid, a \$2,000 move allowance, and an additional \$28 per diem (\$9,000 a year) in spending money. All told, a \$70,000-a-year package; after only a few months, it would grow to \$90,000. I was twenty-six.

**T**he main event of every day was lunch. Lunch was always at a fancy restaurant, with your driver waiting out front. More than thirty-five U.S. companies or organizations were on the AID payroll in Kazakhstan, offering advice on everything from drafting laws to wearing condoms, and every single one of them seemed to be as busy on lunch as Burson Marsteller was. The hours before and after lunch were, generally a blur of meetings between consultants,

consulting companies, consulting companies, and government of consulting companies. I would retrieve a cell of mine—cars from a coat pocket and incorporate into a memo summarizing it. Monday met with so, discussed such and such. Tuesday met with such and such of it, and that group. Mostly I was describing lunch.

My co-workers turned out young Americans like myself, humanities degrees. In the St. Petersburg would have struggled to dislodge ourselves from thousands of cents for entry-level jobs. He were expert consultants to a government, with hefty salary, lofty titles. I was the National Coordinator. My main duty was to run the Kazakhstan Press Club, administered a TV show, a radio shows, and a smaller Marsteller office that bought paper and radio ads, but I was concentrate on the press club.

A good part of my training consisted in looking through the left by my predecessors, and those files I learned, for example that Burson Marsteller had a "plus" contract with AID, which was a fairly standard deal: AID reimburse all of the costs incurred, "plus" pay about 7% on top of that—our profit. In other words, the more we the more we earned. Here was a receipt for thousands of blue slugs emblazoned with the Pegasus logo. (The bags the choked the closets and corner office. Unaware of their chance—they were, after all, from the American people, people of Kazakhstan—I had hundreds home for use as trinkets.) And here were receipts, for billboards, keychains, and even watches, all sported the Pegasus logo. Meant all of it was foreign aid, came referred to by Burson Marsteller as "educational material."

Many of the files concerned the press club itself, which had days before my arrival to provide coverage in the Kazakhstan



Marsteller had come up with a, then convinced AID to I came across a pair of uncandid internal Burson discussing how to sell AID the Cadillac of all press clubs." as titled "What Makes Ed," Ed being a man at AID out. "I think... we can grow a rather pretty little business predecessor.

does fund programs to help Soviet journalists, but Bursteller had no such contract. It did have was a broad man-build support in Kazakhstan markets, and so the pitch for press club blurred ideas such as liberalism, democracy, and free into a single blotch of "good can things that good people to support." It worked. Soon Marsteller was raking in the as on a press club decked out computer and laser printer, r TV, video recorder, satellite and subscriptions to CNN, the *Wall Street Journal-Europe* and the *International Herald Tribune*. In addition to being a pretty little way to spend U.S. dollars, the club provided Bursteller with ready access to journalists, who were taught, in the club's events and publicity, that all of the best journalism reported privatization. The ny's connection to the club never concealed, but neither was entered or explained.<sup>1</sup> If Kazakhstan's journalists asked about the origins and mission, we would that it was aid from America, from the same friendly people had brought them Radio Liberty the Voice of America.

me, the club presented a plausible excuse to escape the main Burice and relax before (or after) The club's wooden chairs somewhat uncomfortable, so I sent my staff out shop-

ugh Burson-Marsteller pulled out of Kazakhstan programs sixteen months press club still exists. In October 1996, "registered as an independent organization" by three young Kazakhstani- s writing, the question of whether it will P.R. aspect and become a true jour-club remains unanswered.

ping for stuffed armchairs, which I assumed were being billed to the U.S. government, along with everything else. I was part of the team.

**K**azakhstan is an ecological disaster, with oil reserves, wedged between Siberia and China. It is the home of the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing range—the Soviet answer to the Nevada flats—and the Virgin Lands agricultural campaign launched by Nikita Khrushchev, in which millions of acres of pastureland were overplowed into dusty worthlessness.

*National Geographic* has suggested that Ust Kamenogorsk, a small city in northern Kazakhstan, may be the most frighteningly polluted city in the former Soviet Union. Ust, as the locals call it, is just a two-hour drive from the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. It is also the home of industrial giants such as the Ublinsky Metallurgical Works, where, according to Greenpeace, an explosion of some sort in the late 1980s coated the city with a fine film of zinc dust. City-wide nosebleed epidemics that stop as suddenly and inexplicably as they start are common.

Newspapers in Ust were overcharging us for ads about privatization. This was actually to our profit, but the naive young American stationed there, not accustomed to Cost-Plus Think, felt it ought to change. A seminar, we reasoned, could wow locals into a new respect for Burson-Marsteller and the U.S. government, after which we would get drunk together, become friends for life, and ad rates would go down.

Seminars are the bread and butter of the foreign-aid community. They can be billed as "training," and training the locals is very fashionable at AID. More important, seminars produce "deliverables"—a deliverable being any physical proof of our work. Examples of deliverables from a seminar include written agendas and programs, local media coverage, and carefully composed photographs: serious Kazakhstanis at desks in a classroom; wise Americans leaning on overhead projectors; racially mixed groups of happy Russians and ethnic Kazakhs engaged in solving happy imaginary

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problems; post-seminar Americans, Russians, and Kazakhs drinking to international friendship. All of it—photographs, agendas, news clippings—goes into a box delivered to AID in Washington, D.C. Deliverables are the sole benchmark by which AID evaluates success or failure.

Burson-Marsteller was always rich in deliverables, but we still loved seminars. Battling the logistics energized the whole office, and seminars provided valuable evidence of our expertise—for how better to prove that someone is an expert than to feature him as a speaker?

As National Media Coordinator, I was slated to speak. This would not be the first time. Some weeks back, my boss, George Nikolaieff, had decided to hold a seminar at the press club for our workers in the regions outside Almaty. I suggested a talk on journalistic ethics, which George thought was a fine idea. Then I learned that I would be addressing, among others, journalists paid a Burson-Marsteller salary to orchestrate positive news coverage of privatization. When the day arrived, Almaty's real journalists were shoed away from the press club and the doors were locked. Introduced in glowing terms as a journalist published by the *Los Angeles Times* and the Associated Press, I stood up, gave a vague, noncommittal speech, and sat back down. I wondered briefly how I would answer if anyone asked about the ethics of a journalist taking money from a foreign P.R. company to praise the government, but it never came up.

Nikolai Ushkov, the hard-drinking editor of his own newspaper in Semipalatinsk, made the two-hour drive along snowy, decrepit roads to witness my next attempt to hold forth on "ethics" and "integrity." He did not think much of it. As he said at the seminar, and elaborated on after a few shots of vodka at the evening banquet, my insistence that journalists not take money from businessmen in return for favorable news coverage was incorrect. "I don't like taking money for hidden advertisements," he said. "But I need to."

The local authorities in Semipalatinsk had already crushed

Ushkov's first newspaper, *Slovo* ("The Word"), with an oppressive tax on advertising. Backed by a local businessman, Ushkov launched a second paper, *Novoe Slovo* ("The New Word"), but a few mornings after Ushkov reported that modestly paid local officials were somehow able to afford palatial homes in the suburbs, that same businessman turned up crying: he'd been visited by the tax inspector. Ushkov had come to our seminar with hopes of hearing how he could get financial backing; instead, he heard me.

The morning after the banquet, as we treated our hangovers Semi-palatinsk-style—alternating glasses of cheap red wine with glasses of cheap instant coffee at a rate of about a glass every three minutes—Ushkov told me frankly what he needed: money. I gave him the phone number for the Eurasia Foundation. The Eurasia Foundation does what most people probably think of as foreign aid: it gives small grants (usually less than \$50,000) for concrete projects. But when I called some days later to catch up, Ushkov told me that *Novoe Slovo* had been shut down. "The [oblast governor] doesn't let me run my newspaper. He says, 'Yes, you tell the truth, and I like that to an extent. But to another extent...'"

"Did you call the Eurasia Foundation?" I asked.

"I got some very polite documents from them; they even sent me a brochure. But they said that since I am a commercial newspaper, I couldn't receive a kopeck," he said. Noting that the Eurasia Foundation didn't seem to believe that his paper wasn't turning a profit, Ushkov apologetically hastened to blame himself: "I probably didn't fill out the forms correctly."

After my encounter with Ushkov, I began to look more critically at what I was doing. I realized that for a negligible sum—far less than half of my yearly salary—Ushkov could be the kind of journalist he deserved to be and Semipalatinsk Oblast could have a real newspaper. Instead, we wasted his time, and then bragged about it to the U.S. government, which paid us to do it all over again.

And yet . . . I was making money, and working less, than I had before. I had plenty of time to spend with Svetlana, and we had decided, in the first flush of financial security, to have a child. And so I signed myself to being one of those useless yet well-paid people—leading coordinators, dog psychologists, and the like—who clutter the world, doing well, doing nothing.

Myself I could live with that, for now.

George asked me along to a meeting with Sarybay Kalmurzayev, the chairman of the State Privatization Committee. Kalmurzayev was the government's top privatization czar, a tyrant who held the veto over everything we did. That day I needed Kalmurzayev's approval for some television ads.

I had hoped to see a hard-boiled team of executives oozing American self-confidence, an exchange of business wit. Instead, Kalmurzayev shouted and we groveled. We meekly through a vague tirade about our incompetence. Then, when Kalmurzayev began ticking off demands, we perked up and scribbled furiously on legal pads.

Demand: *An end to all political sociological research.*

Kalmurzayev had seen a newspaper poll indicating that Kazakhs mistrusted privatization, so all sociology had to go. He may have had something there. We had thousands of AID dollars on paper, our own but let no one see the results—not even AID. Too often our findings suggested that our propaganda campaign was failing.

Demand: *A seminar for Kalmurzayev and his workers on the principles of advertising and P.R.*

"You're always holding seminars to help journalists, but what about me," he yelled. "We need training."

Demand: *Lots—no, millions—of pocket calendars.*

When he had finished scribbling, George announced that we were happy to spend U.S. taxes to buy pocket calendars and to give them to Kalmurzayev's Soviet-trained cronies all of Madison Avenue's way. When co-workers later asked



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## "Greater Israel" Does it have any relation to reality?

There are strident requests by the Arab countries, by the Palestinians, and indeed by much of the world that Israel should once and for all abandon its dream of a "Greater Israel." Israel's alleged expansionist ambitions have long been a staple of Arab anti-Israel propaganda. But what does it really mean? Does it have any relation to reality?

### What are the facts?

**Stripes on the Flag.** Arab propaganda has it that the two stripes on the flag of Israel, above and below the star of David, represent the Nile and the Euphrates River, respectively, and signify Israel's expansionist desire, to form an "empire" that would supposedly reach from Cairo to Baghdad. But that has no basis in fact, of course. Nowhere in any documents of the Jewish state, in any statement by even the most "radical" spokesman can reference to anything like that be found.

**Israel's Borders.** "Palestine," part of the Ottoman Empire before World War I, came under British mandate after that war. The Golan Heights were part of Palestine. Israel's current borders are the result of the 1948

War of Independence, in which six Arab armies invaded the new-born state, but were utterly defeated, and the 1967 Six-Day War, in which those same armies once again invaded Israel. In that war, Israel conquered the Gaza Strip, the vast Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights. And Israel also repossessed the provinces of Judea/Samaria, (the "West Bank"), and the eastern part of Jerusalem, which had been occupied by the Jordanians nineteen years earlier, when they invaded

the just new-born Jewish state. In order to achieve peace with Egypt, Israel returned to it all of the Sinai. Israel is and has always been prepared to grant full autonomy to the Arabs living in Judea/Samaria. It is clear to all knowledgeable in military matters that, for immutable strategic reason, Israel cannot for any foreseeable future abandon or yield military control of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and of the Golan Heights.

**The Myth of Greater Israel.** Israel is one of the smallest countries in the world. Most people don't realize how small it really is. One wonders whether those who keep talking

Israel	France	California	Syria	Ecuador
10,840 sq. mi.	213,673 sq. mi.	160,222 sq. mi.	72,209 sq. mi.	110,688 sq. mi.



**Greater Israel? It's a myth. See for yourself!**

about "Greater Israel" and who wish to pressure Israel to divest itself of a big chunk of its territory are aware of it. A look at the map is revealing. Including the vaunted "West Bank," the Gaza

Strip and the Golan Heights, the entire area of the country is barely over 10,000 square miles. France is twenty times as large as Israel, California fifteen times as large, Syria about seven times as large, and "tiny" Ecuador ten times as large. Israel is so small that its area is less than half the size of San Bernardino County, California; if it were dropped into Lake Michigan it would disappear from sight without a trace. The Arab countries in contrast are huge—they occupy twice the area of the United States. Greater Israel, indeed!

It is clear that the concept of "Greater Israel," lacks any validity and has no basis in fact. To apply such a concept to a country as small as Israel would almost seem a mockery. Obviously, Israel has no territorial ambitions. All it wants is to live in peace within secure and defensible borders, just as any other country and as required under U.N. Resolution No. 242. But it seems that the size of Israel, whether "greater" or "lesser" is not at all the concern of Israel's implacable Arab enemies. The very existence of Israel, of a Jewish state in their midst of whatever size, is unacceptable to the Arabs. And unless that mindset changes, not until the Arab states have become democracies and have come to full acceptance of Israel, are willing to make true peace with it, and are prepared to establish normal and friendly relations with Israel can any possible territorial adjustment be considered. As it looks right now, that may still take some time.

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some sort of aerosol in a guard's face. When Kalmurzayev saw this he hated it. "Why are you scaring people with your soap opera?" he yelled.

I myself preferred earlier drafts of Ulkiza's script, as described to me by an American colleague who had vetoed them. They featured nuclear submarines surfacing in the ocean and fire-breathing dragons swooping down from the skies, and were much too ambitious ever to be filmed. One episode merits a fuller description: The Kazakh and Russian families decide to build a simple house but can't figure out how. Suddenly a hot-air balloon soars into view. The balloon has "Soros Foundation" emblazoned on it. It lands. Americans leap out of the basket, build the house, and sail away. The Kazakhstani wave and cheer.

Anyone working for AID in Kazakhstan, directly or indirectly, was entitled to a \$94 per diem on top of his or her salary. The Latin term is pure Duckspeak: only through euphemism can one argue that generously paid people deserve an additional \$94 every day, including weekends (or \$34,310 a year)—just for the hell of it. We at Burson, however, were not getting the full AID-mandated \$94; our per diem was a mere \$25. AID had allocated the money, but Burson-Marsteller had refused to claim it for us. The reasoning here was that all per diems dropped to around \$25 on days spent outside of Almaty, and Burson merely wanted to protect us from the stress of an income that fluctuated with travel. In other words, the company assumed that we would prefer to make about a fourth of what we could in return for knowing exactly how little that amount would be.

My fellow young Americans and I held a secret meeting. We wanted the \$94 per diem. We discussed the possibility of a strike but opted instead for a quieter barrage of memos and faxes. It succeeded, and it felt strangely good: we had set a specific goal, worked toward it, and achieved it in an empirically measurable way. For the first time since my arrival, I felt like a real doer.

Then things turned ugly.

With George away on vacation, and me left in charge, a \$75,000 wire transfer from the States got lost between banks. Ad agencies came to be paid; we asked for their patience. Newspaper ads were scheduled to go out; we asked editors to carry the ads on credit. Then Mirhat Nigmatulin came by. A short, dark man with a mustache, always in a black overcoat and a black fedora, Nigmatulin was the very picture of the sleazy Soviet bureaucrat: Boris from "Rocky and Bullwinkle." He was Kalmurzayev's press secretary. We had dubbed him "Pig-matulin," and one of my predecessors had placed a doll of a pig in a dress above the office door to represent him.

Nigmatulin was furious. He stood beneath the pig in the dress and screamed. What was this about us having no money? Did we know that we owed the Butya ad agency—an agency Nigmatulin had *personally* recommended—about \$3,000? (How did he know this?) Or that we owed Atamura—the privatization-committee press—\$69,000 for the five million pocket calendars they had printed? We owed him \$69,000! Where was it?

The Atamura contract was in the files. In addition to the printing and paper costs, Atamura had included an author's fee, presumably for the five-sentence text exhorting citizens to support privatization; office rent; storage; transport; banking services; a "labor fund"; medical insurance; "social" insurance; and a road-building fund. An additional 5 percent of this running total was added for an "investment fund." Then an additional 10 percent of the new total was added for "rush printing." Then 10 percent of *that* was added as Atamura's profit margin. Grand total: \$69,000. Where was it?

Olga Kim, Burson's locally hired accountant, had been complaining for weeks about Atamura's bizarre charges. Since when, she asked, did printing a calendar also involve building a road, or insuring the printer's employees, or paying their office rent? George had told her to drop it. But, as she was quick to point out, this week George was gone, and I was the boss.

I was still gaping at the when Olga laid the phone bill in front of me and solved a snafu: Although we paid the phone company, the phone company briefly cut off our service in October, November, and December. Why? Because we had no phone bills through Kalmurzayev's office, and he hadn't paid. An exasperated Olga had sent the bill directly to the phone company. Our November bill of \$6,600 only to learn that Kalmurzayev's office had padded in \$4,309.75 in fictitious charges. When Olga charged Kalmurzayev's account with this, he had sneered, "What are you doing with us or with them?"

After learning this, and the wake of Nigmatulin's visit, I was the person I wanted to sue. I had seen Kalmurzayev, but I had seen him on TV commercials that needed no approval. These ads, filmed by an agency called Charm, were short and in the style of Charlie Chaplin (Stalin's favorite), spoofing government-run businesses and showing those same businesses as new and idealized private ones. In one, a sullen woman at a dry cleaner accepts a suit coat, takes the cigarette dangling from her lips, dons a gas mask, and dries the coat for hours. She returns with the wrong coat, and again with the wrong coat, and again, until the customer gets his coat, takes it, and storms out, an incense burner burned into the back.

It was the iron mark that Kalmurzayev cited in vetoing the ad: "I never left iron marks on you," he said. "The Soviet dry cleaner," he said. "I then came out from behind the counter to take my arm. Examining the thread of my tweed suit coat, he found the thread and began to tease it. The strings would be all loose and they'd start coming out, I said."

We began to argue. I told her the ad was a farce—no one wears gas masks at the dry cleaner, right? Suddenly Kalmurzayev was so angry that we owed Atamura \$69,000 for the pocket calendars. "You owe me \$69,000!" We owed Butya agency he had *personally* recommended, \$3,000! What busi-



ive using an incompetent ad  
y like Charm when we hadn't  
paid Butya? We should have  
Butya instead! We were paying  
of thousands for a soap opera,  
e had hired an incompetent di-  
! Where did we find that awful  
a company? "All of Kazakhstan  
ghing at you! Why didn't you  
e?" he said. Naming a promi-  
figure in Kazakhstan's film in-  
, Kalmurzayev demanded that  
hoot the soap opera under that  
direction. Moreover, Kalmur-  
stated, from now on he himself  
decide whom Burson hired to  
ce ads and shows. I started to  
but Kalmurzayev turned and  
nd of interview.

k at the office, Olga handed  
rson-Marsteller's contract with  
t. We were paying a whopping  
.000 for the soap opera, or  
33 per episode—an outrageous  
nt. (By contrast, the economic  
program I was in charge of cost  
ly about \$1,200 per episode.)  
Ul'kiza's director was probably  
ng the loot with friends in the  
of Nursultan Nazarbayev, the  
ent of Kazakhstan. It was thus  
o let Ul'kiza overcharge us, not  
y for the cost-plus but because  
worth courting the goodwill of  
e with such powerful friends. It  
red-swimming-trunks situation.  
us suppose that Burson's AID  
act is up for extension (as it  
ould be). AID sends a man to  
k things out. He visits, say,  
urmurayev. What do they talk  
? Probably the AID man asks  
urmurayev for an "honest assess-  
": Who among the Americans  
ng good work? Kalmurzayev  
Burson-Marsteller! They are  
crucial work, saving our econ-  
Give them more money!  
d that is exactly what AID

eks later, when asked to docu-  
his expenses with receipts, the  
opera director took deep of-  
He would do no such thing,  
id. Fear of the tax inspector  
l keep his employees from ad-  
ng that they had received such  
salaries. When Olga pressed  
e grudgingly suggested that his  
yees might own up to having

received a *tenth* of their stated  
salaries. It was an awkward moment:  
the man had effectively admitted to  
stealing not only from us but from  
his own employees. This was later  
confirmed when Olga interviewed  
the actors, some of whom broke into  
sobs when they learned how much  
they were supposedly being  
paid.

**Y**es, almost everyone was win-  
ning: young Americans with fat pay-  
checks, corporations with fat con-  
tracts, bureaucrats fattened by theft.  
Only those involved abstractly were  
losing: the American taxpayer,  
whose altruism had been twisted;  
and the Kazakhstanis, who were see-  
ing Soviet corruption thrive on  
American aid. Congress sets aside  
billions; AID gives it to Americans.  
Proud U.S. government spokesmen  
inform the Kazakhstanis that they  
will soon benefit from millions of  
dollars in aid. Instead, they are sad-  
dled with hundreds of American  
"experts," and to the humiliating in-  
jury of publicly receiving humanitar-  
ian aid is added the insult of not  
even getting it. Feeling cheated, the  
bureaucrats scheme, and soon they  
are steering what's left of the foreign  
aid toward friends or relatives or  
themselves.<sup>2</sup>

I recall a grim breakfast at the  
home of William Courtney, the U.S.  
ambassador to Kazakhstan. The Re-  
publicans had swept Congress, and  
Jesse Helms was grouching about the  
bottomless "foreign financial rat-  
holes" (e.g., my Maryland checking  
account) into which AID was shov-  
eling money. Courtney, troubled by  
privatization's plodding pace and low  
reputation, called for radical sugges-  
tions from the sixty-odd "experts"  
gathered there. We discussed, among  
other options, covertly lobbying the  
program's opponents in Kazakhstan's

<sup>2</sup> In late April, president Nazarbayev  
dressed down Uras Dzhandosov, head of the  
national bank, on television. Nazarbayev  
said that some \$60 million in foreign aid had  
been given to Kazakhstan, and demanded of  
Dzhandosov, "How was this spent? You tell  
me!" "Mostly this goes to consultants,"  
Dzhandosov replied. "To what consul-  
tants?" Nazarbayev shot back. "Sixty mil-  
lion?" This exchange is much discussed in  
Almaty today.

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parliament. At one point, Courtney asked, "Should we shut privatization down? Or shut it down in half of the country, as a demonstration?"

I wondered how the American ambassador would do that—shut down another government's number-one domestic policy.

The United States Information Service official then made an announcement: "There's someone from ABC News in town, so please be careful who you talk to!"

This anxious plea could be AID's motto. When senior AID staff in Washington discussed how to fend off congressional hostility, they concluded that dishonesty was the best policy. Notes from the meeting describe their strategy as "delay, postpone, obfuscate, derail." Months after that memo was made public, AID spokesman Jay Byrne still refused to criticize it or to back away from the tactics it called for. "We have a very clear strategy with regard to the [hostile] legislation, and that is to defeat it," he explained to the *Washington Post*.

Titillating tales of foreign-aid idiocy have been trickling into Washington for years. Lawrence Pope, the U.S. ambassador to Chad, once intervened to keep AID from funding a study on "Viability of the Chadian State." In a State Department cable, he wondered, "What exactly would we have done if they concluded that it wasn't [viable]?" The *Moscow Times* has reported that AID spent \$200,000 in 1994 to renovate an apartment for the organization's director for Russia. It has spent money promoting Haiti as a relocation destination for companies tired of shelling out the U.S. minimum wage. It has used American tax dollars to build pay toilets in Indonesia and to advertise golf courses in Ireland. Given the ludicrous nature of such projects, it is little wonder that the organization respects its own privacy; and Burson-Marsteller, which has downplayed everything from the *Exxon Valdez* spill to the Bhopal disaster to Argentina's Dirty War, is well equipped to serve in this regard.

**F**riday was dress-down day at the office, but some of us started earlier

in the week. So on the day the AID auditor arrived in a three-piece pinstriped suit, looking serious and white and mid-fifties and patrician, I was in jeans, and my female twenty-something colleagues were dressed for after-work aerobics and jogging. He must have been surprised at our youth, assuming, of course, he'd seen our salaries.

He first interviewed our business manager, Naya Kenman, a woman in her twenties wearing a gray sweatshirt and black shorts over tights. They had barely begun when a co-worker strolled in, picked up the telephone, dialed fourteen digits, and said, "Mommy? Hi, it's me!" The auditor's eyebrows rose. Naya spoke more loudly and tried to draw his attention to the hardships we had imposed on ourselves in the name of cost-efficiency. She explained how Burson-Marsteller had arranged with DHL to send a twice-monthly package from Washington, because consolidating all mail was much cheaper than sending documents piecemeal.

On cue, the DHL man arrived, a huge package in his arms. In his wake was another co-worker, clapping excitedly. "It's my L.L. Bean clothes, they're here!" she cried, tearing into the package to pull out a sweater and a parka. Other colleagues, unaware of the auditor, rushed to see if their orders had come in, too. I hoped our man from Ust Kamenogorsk wouldn't start talking about the Soloflex he was planning to order from the States, though he at least intended to pay for shipment.

George then joined the audit interview. The auditor asked about a letter given AID contractors that allowed us to fly for reduced rates on the government airlines. How much, he asked, was this saving taxpayers? Very much, answered Naya, and then she put forth an illustration: "For example, I'm taking a vacation, flying part of the distance inside Kazakhstan on a cheap ticket, and I'm saving hundreds!" To the auditor's queer expression, George added, "She probably shouldn't be doing that, should she?"

No, the auditor said, she shouldn't. Despite all this, the interview last-

ed only about an hour. There was painstaking examination of documents, no double-checking the memos or the bids. Nothing came of it, of the memos that I and others (including Naya) eventually wrote to our superiors. According to a 1996 report by JNA Associates consulting firm studying AID's work in the former Soviet Union, no AID contract has ever had a full financial audit.

Shortly thereafter, I quit. The *Angeles Times* had offered me a salary that was about one-third what I was making in Kazakhstan. Sylvia and I discussed it for all of five minutes before we decided. Burson-Marsteller wished me well and offered, should I change my mind, to take me back. They have since made overtures to hire me on three separate occasions, to work in either Maty or Moscow.

Those offers have not been entirely unattractive: I liked many of the people I worked with at Burson, the company always treated me fairly. We made some wonderful new friends in Kazakhstan, took French lessons and tennis lessons and driving lessons, traveled around the world, ate out every night, and banked about \$4,000 every month. That's not bad.

But then there are the red swimming trunks. When I think of the see the American foreign-aid mission for the farce that it is, and know I've made the right decision. All three of the principal actors here, cast in truth's cruel light: grasping bureaucrat, who can be to pal around with but is usually ter something; the American contractor, whose first loyalty is to his corporation and who sees keeping locals fat and happy as the best measure of success. And hovering over both is AID, ready to award its multimillions once the swimming trunks are handed over. Foreign advisers, local bureaucrat, American and Kazakhstani zip past each other on the water slides, laughing and winning and pledging eternal friendship playing nice for befuddled old Uncle Sam, who smiles and waves back and keeps on sending the money.



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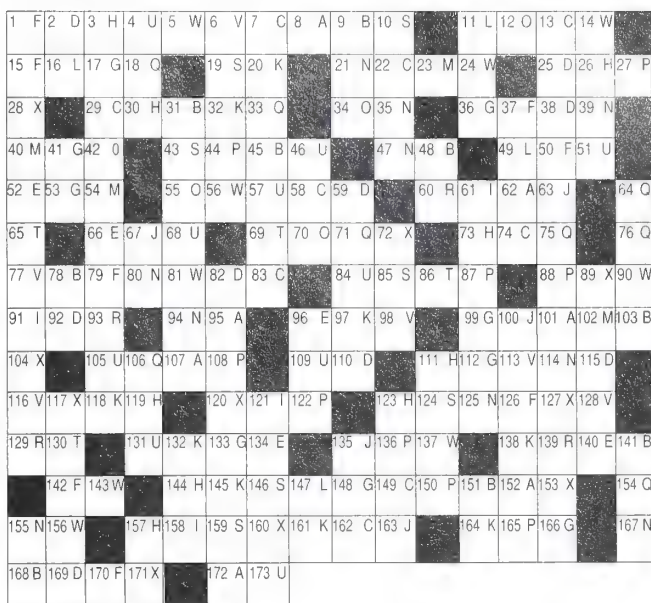
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# DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 176

By Thomas H. Middleton

The diagram, when filled in, will contain a quotation from a published work. The numbered squares in the diagram correspond to the numbered blanks under the WORDS. The WORDS form an acrostic: the first letter of each spells the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken. The letter in the upper right-hand corner of each square indicates the WORD containing the letter to be entered in that square. Contest rules and the solution to last month's puzzle appear on page 67.



CLUES	WORDS							
Bewilder, perplex	101	62	172	152	8	107	95	
Disdain, haughtiness	45	168	141	31	78	151	48	9
								103
Town in S. France; bleu	83	22	149	74	58	29	13	162
								7
Instrument for measuring airborne dust	115	169	110	38	25	82	2	92
								59
Cheap, vulgar	96	140	66	52	134			
Goldeneye; large marmot related to the woodchuck; Am. painter and etcher (1834-1903)	170	37	142	1	15	50	79	126
King of England, 935-940	17	112	53	148	133	166	36	41
								99
By its very nature (2 Lat. wds.)	144	73	111	30	123	3	157	119
								26
Star that suddenly brightens, then gradually fades; (loosely) lox	121	158	91	61				
Brazen, brash	135	100	63	67	163			
Not sound, sickly	132	145	164	20	118	32	161	97
								138
Elan, spirited action	147	49	11	16				

M. Socialist presidential candidate, 1900-20	40	54	102	23				
N. Cabarets, establishments for evening entertainment	35	47	167	155	80	114	21	125
							94	39
O. Bunk, hogwash	12	55	34	70	42			
P. River that joins the Tigris to form the Shatt-al-Arab	122	150	88	44	27	165	108	136
								87
Q. Bear witness regarding (2 wds.)	71	76	18	106	33	154	75	64
R. Shot of what's good for you	60	129	93	139				
S. Absolute dud	19	146	10	85	124	159	43	
T. Uncertain	86	130	65	69				
U. Big buddy to Will Scarlet, Allan-a-Dale, Friar Tuck, and the gang (2 wds.)	105	109	4	54	51	68	131	173
							57	46
V. Calm, comfort, mollify	6	77	113	116	128	98		
W. Differently	95	56	81	24	137	14	5	143
								156
X. Damn' Yankee, perhaps	160	120	104	127	117	153	89	171
							28	72



# PUZZLE

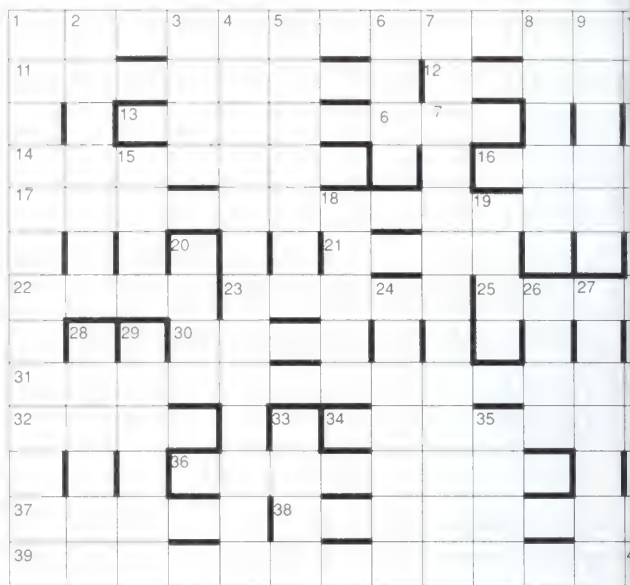
## Head-Hunting III

By Richard E. Maltby Jr.  
(with acknowledgments to Zander of  
The Listener)

**T**he first letter of each answer is out of place in the diagram. Thus, if the answer to a clue were SMART, it would be entered as MSART, MASRT, MARST, or MARTS. Additionally, there are eight unclued lights, two to a side, on the perimeter of the diagram (1–10, 39–40 Across; 1–39, 10–40 Down), which have something in common. Clue answers include three proper names and one common foreign word. Unchecked letters in the perimeter words can be rearranged to spell GIRLS SURE WIN THE SUN. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 67.

### ACROSS

11. Make dinner, in a way, except be prompt (8)
12. Pretty thing has dandy time (5)
13. Inhibited about spot for sexual excitement, one becomes redeemed (8)
14. China, in this case, might be seen backing European initiative to make a new opening (7)
16. Party cook is an old bird (4)
17. \$500 on marrying (see going rate), ending separate but equal (13)
21. The deep fellow has an ego (4)
22. Solo flight—capital! (4)
23. Don Juan didn't move your outsides (5)
25. Dance but otherwise laugh about it (4)
33. Bones of brothers deserted by the flanks (4)
31. Sounds like a precedent for virgin birth! Bad idea (13)
32. Chills right out from contest (4)
34. Convention that's firmly united (7)



36. Most stout is sent back, nevertheless brew bites (8)
37. Least corrupt cop (5)
38. A minor adjustment to generate (8)

### DOWN

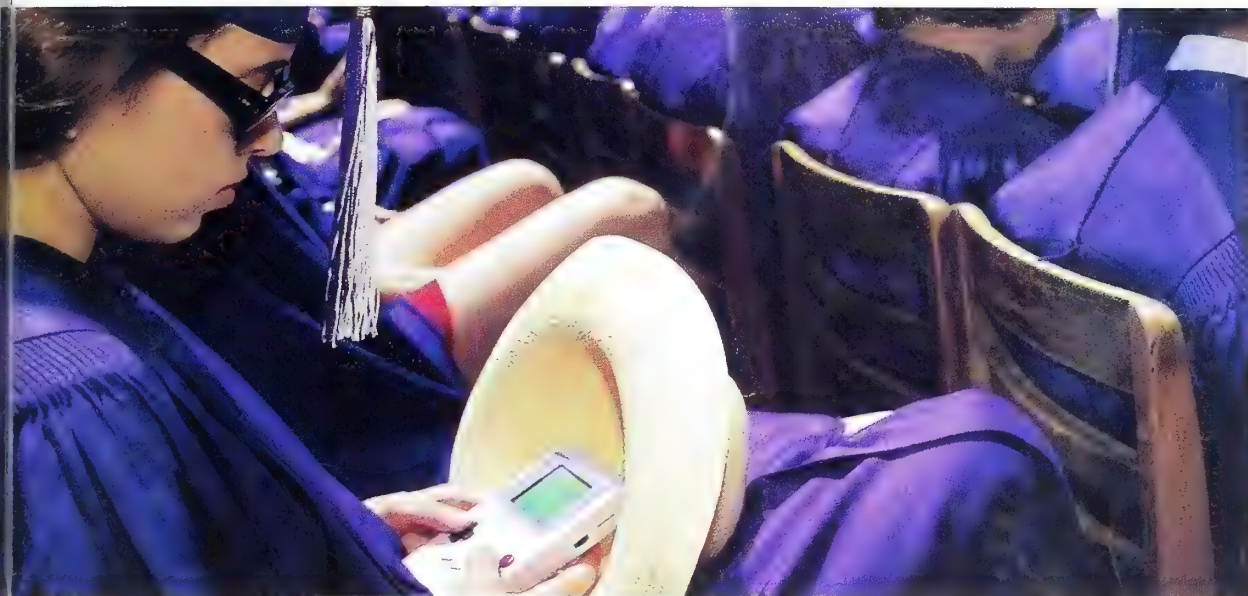
2. Gloria's cultured semiprecious stone (7)
3. Bound ledger entry (4)
4. Beatles in a car mobbed—it's understandable (13)
5. Takes out a number of pages bound by liner (7)
6. Sound made by shorn boxer (4)
7. Before going out to pasture and rotating? (13)
8. Correct dosage of salt (6)
9. Old Irish dentist faces endless financial catastrophe (6)
15. Molding circle, turn to the right (4)
18. Marble Arch, Grant's American Tomb—everything fronts on them (5)
19. Red topping #6 (4)
20. Wolf down Greek bread? On the contrary! (4)
24. Tarts seen around gym, exercising little ones (7)
26. A song goes up and down! (4)
27. Works on, after José and Cal get unionized (7)
28. Lass is tentative, holds back (6)
29. Pool cues do change in Portugal (6)
33. Come down heavily on me after bringing up the disheartened (4)
35. Mark the end of alarm going off (4)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Head-Hunting III," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by August 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the October issue. Winners of the June puzzle, "Downers," are Reese E. Campbell, Russell, Pennsylvania; Norma Ensner, San Francisco, California; and Lucy G. Bates, Denver, Colorado.



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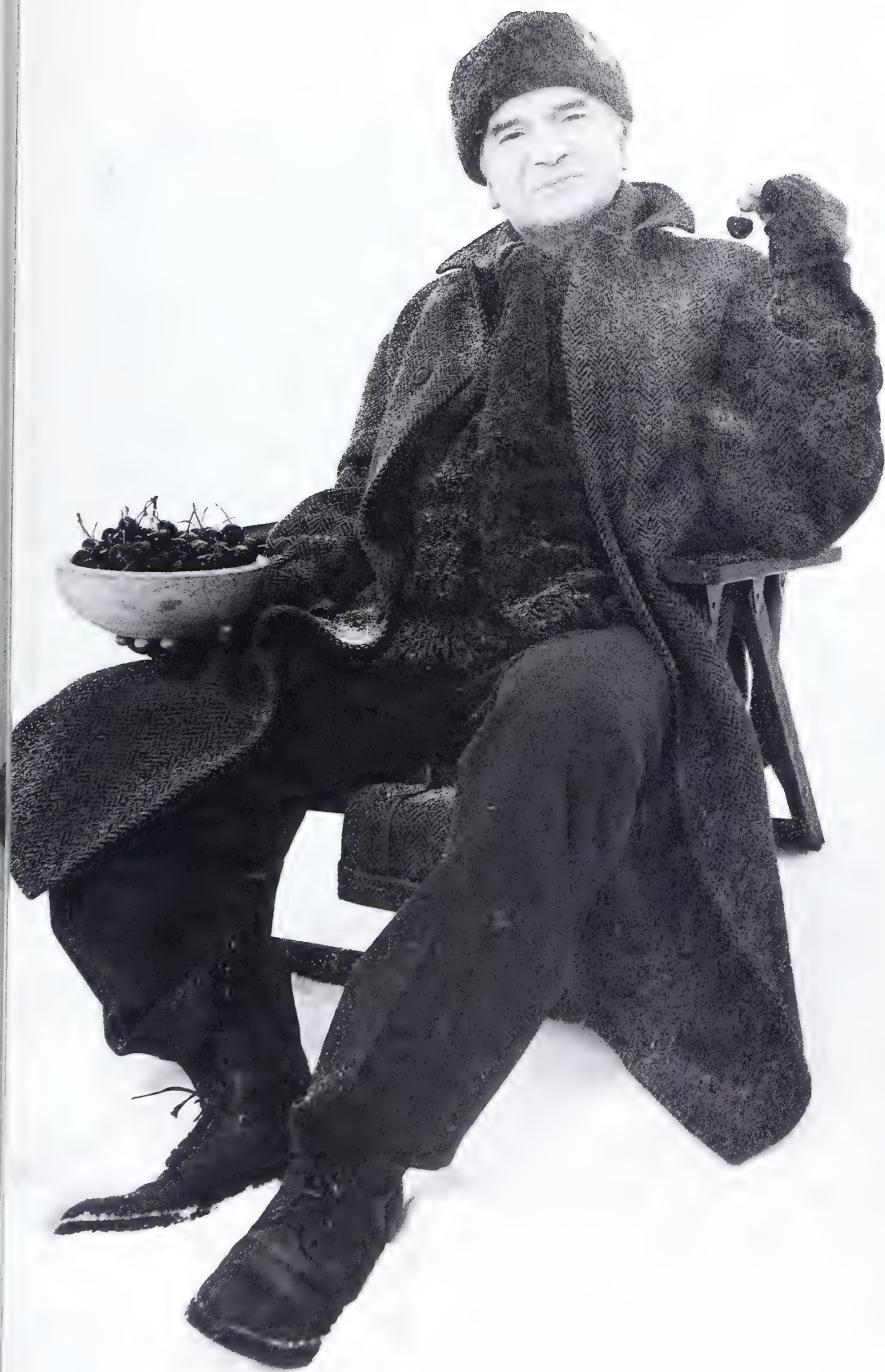
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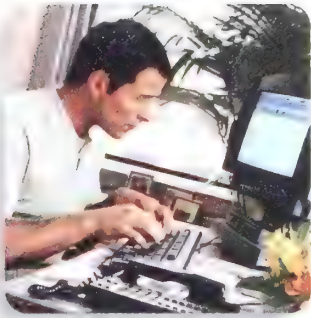


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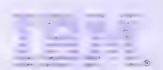
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## The Forests or the Trees?

Gratitude and disgust make odd bedfellows, but these were the emotions I felt on reading Paul Roberts's exposé of the mismanagement of our national forests ["The Federal Chain-Saw Massacre," June]. I was grateful to both Roberts and *Harper's Magazine* for shedding some much-needed light on the taxpayer-subsidized destruction of our national forests and disgusted that this kind of blatant corporate welfare should (after all these years) continue unabated. Banking on the fact that the majority of Americans visiting the national forests are unlikely to walk beyond the "beauty strip," the lumber and cattle industries have recently begun a disinformation campaign (featuring grandfatherly fly fishermen, rough-hewn ranchers, and crinkly eyed lumberjacks) that, in the best tradition of our increasingly virtual republic, shamelessly attempts to recast eye-bugging destruction as a gift to the nation.

Anyone wishing to view firsthand what Roberts is talking about might drive through the remains of Olympic National Forest in Washington. About an hour outside of Hoquiam, one enters a savaged landscape of stumps and brambles and impenetrable briar thickets. The much advertised "replants," authentic-looking enough to tourists passing in cheetah speed along the highway, are even worse. Nothing moves.

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nothing lives in these simulated forests: no snakes, no mammals, birds in the understory.

Why does this matter? To the catalogue of financial and environmental reasons offered by Roberts would add two more: First, as the world of the made continues to replace the world of the born, we must come to realize that the human mind requires the experience of wilderness the way a plant requires nitrogen. Second, because landscape and history are linked, we may come to see that every clear-cut, or "developed" acre erases some part of our personal and communal history. I can't retract the trip I took with my father 20 years back if the landscape we walked through lies stockpiled in Japan. With 95 percent of our old-growth forest gone, the lumber industry is in the position of a thief who, having carted off most of our possessions, now demands that we split what's left and pay for the U-Haul.

Mark Slouka  
San Diego, Calif.

Paul Roberts's "Federal Chair Saw Massacre" is the most compelling of the crisis facing our national forests that I have had the pleasure to read.

The "salvage rider" to the Budget Rescissions Act of 1995, which loosened federal logging regulations, is only the most recent industry attack on our national forests by a willing Congress and a pliant administration. June 4, 1997, marked the 100th anniversary of the first budget rider affecting our national forests, one that forever altered our landscape.



When Congress, in response to the sales fraud of the timber syndicates, passed the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, it provided for the president to establish forest reserves where no one could "cut, remove, or use any of the timber, grass, or other natural product." It was not until June 4, 1897, that Congress gave in to timber-industry pressure and opened the national forests to timber sales with a rider tacked on to an Interior Department appropriations bill.

Breaking the "mutually beneficial fiction" of the Forest Service, industry, and Congress described by Roberts is the key to putting "reverses" back into the title of our national forests. Eliminating the use of budget riders as a vehicle for congressional mayhem would be a critical first step in achieving that goal.

*Mark Solomon*  
Executive Director  
and Empire Public Lands Council  
Spokane, Wash.

Although Paul Roberts whines on and on about the rape of the forests,

he offers no other plan than to end all harvest. Does he live in a hemp teepee and compose on clay tablets? The debate that created the dismal Clinton forest policy must be abandoned in favor of a course that spans generations instead of elections. The tampering by lawmakers and presidents will be ongoing, shortsighted, and the death of our forests unless replaced by a cohesive, scientific, and permanent plan for their management.

*Scott Rosin*  
Toledo, Ore.

Paul Roberts seriously misrepresents the facts about our national forests. The United States' forest and paper industry recognizes the importance of healthy national forests. That's why our industry has been so involved in protecting and improving our forests for future generations. Most scientists and professional managers believe that there is a forest health problem throughout the national forest system. They recommend thinning overstocked stands and reintroducing prescribed burn-

ing to keep both the number of trees and the wildfire-fuel levels within acceptable ranges.

American forestry is a success. Just one measure of this success is that we're growing more than we're harvesting. But the benefits that our forests provide are not sustained and improved by accident. With the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, America's forest and paper industry has made a bold commitment to the sustainability and improvement of our natural resources. This initiative sets policy goals for sustainable forestry on all private and public land in the United States and commits members of the American Forest & Paper Association to practice a land-stewardship ethic that integrates the growing, nurturing, and harvesting of trees for useful products with the conservation of soil, air and water quality, wildlife and fish habitat, and aesthetics.

*W. Henson Moore*  
President  
American Forest  
& Paper Association  
Washington, D.C.

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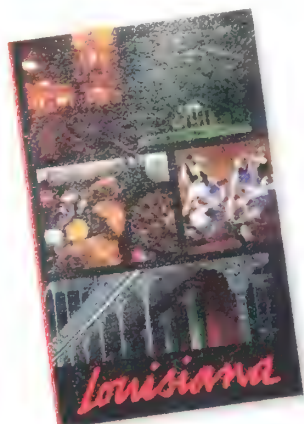
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# Louisiana

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You do not destroy a forest by cutting down the trees! Logging and forestry activities are probably the most benign of all resource-based industries. Both agriculture and mining, for example, must destroy natural ecosystems in order to exist.

In much of the West, clear-cutting is the most environmentally sound way to log a forest. The trees that foresters want to grow back require a "disaster" to get reestablished. They need light and mineral-rich soil to make a viable seedbed. Certainly a logging job is a much less drastic "disaster" than wildfire or the insect and disease infestations that destroy the trees for no one's benefit.

Logging a forest never destroys it. Trees grow back faster than most people imagine. If you look carefully at the photographs of clear-cut "devastation" illustrating Paul Roberts's article, you will see green smudges on the ground. Those smudges are trees invading the area to establish a new stand that can be logged again in about 100 years. A long time? Not to Mother Nature!

Nicolas E. Tipple

Tipple Logging & Lumber, Inc.  
Ghent, N.Y.

I read Paul Roberts's report on the United States forest program while sitting in the dining hall of a remote British Columbia logging camp. Like hundreds of other Canadian young people, I am funding my post-secondary education by planting trees. In five summers of work, I have seen innumerable clear-cuts and have heard almost as many "forestry is good" lectures. Roberts's article excellently describes the process employed by forestry officials to justify huge clear-cutting operations and the wholesale pillage of our forests. I am presently working on a clear-cut that stretches for at least twenty-five kilometers. It is classified as being several cuts because of several thin strips of trees spaced every five kilometers or so.

Every morning when I start work, I see a slogan that captures the industry's attitude toward reforestation: "Helping Nature Grow Better Trees." I've yet to understand how cutting down a large stand of biodiverse, bug-

infested trees in order to replace them with, at most, two species of same-sized saplings will prevent future problems. For one thing, the mortality rate of our planted trees is far higher than publicly advertised. The sad truth is that there really is no such thing as a forest; once a forest is gone, the planting in the world will never bring it back. But it is possible to raise a crop of trees that are conveniently spaced, tall, straight, and highly marketable—a tree farm, not a forest.

Susanna Haley

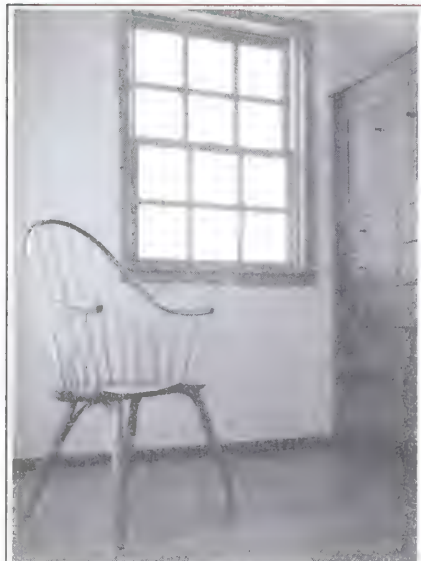
Somewhere in British Columbia

## Gnot!

I wonder what possessed *Harvard Magazine* to reprint Chris Lehman's essay "The Deep Roots of Heaven's Gate" [Readings, June]. Lehman appears to be completely unaware of the problems inherent in any modern discussion of Gnosticism, and his facile comparison of second-century Gnostics and twentieth-century members of Heaven's Gate betrays an inexcusable ignorance of the history of religion.

Until the middle of the twentieth century, the only evidence about Gnosticism available to scholars was polemical texts written by the movement's Christian enemies. The Christians were largely responsible for the portrayal of Gnostics as a "fiercely world-denying" "spiritual aristocracy" who sought access to some kind of "rarefied state" through gnosis. Since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library, a set of Gnostic treatises found in Egypt in 1945, we have learned a great deal more about the Gnostic myths, but we still know very little about their actual beliefs and practices. Taking the bishops Irenaeus and Hippolytus at their word when they describe the Gnostics as elitist mystics is careless and naive, especially since we now know that the Gnostics did not present themselves that way in their own writings.

What is even more careless is to ignore the nearly 2,000 years of history that separate Gnosticism from Heaven's Gate. Gnosticism has hardly been a "consistent, intelligible religious tradition" since late antiquity. In fact, we have no evidence for



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istence between Irenaeus' time and  
r own (with the fascinating excep-  
on of the cult of the Cathari, who  
rived between the twelfth and the  
irteenth centuries). Does Lehmann  
ean to imply that some kind of hid-  
n tradition has been passed down,  
broken, from Valentinus, to Heav-  
l's Gate leader Marshall Apple-  
nite? If he has proof, I can think of  
number of historians who would be  
ry curious to see it. Otherwise, he  
ould make it clear that his essay is  
exercise in imaginative specula-  
n rather than historical analysis.

se Tuzlak  
racuse, N.Y.

## ction in the Backseat

Congratulations to *Harper's Mag-*  
ne for making the slow transition  
soft porn for the literary elite.  
ina in the Backseat" [June] was  
eat! Not too suggestive yet tanta-  
ing enough to provide erotic  
mulation to all of those lonely  
aders. Not long ago, *Harper's* had  
other great story with yet another  
thetic woman, this time having  
ng sex in the backseat of a car  
athy Dobie, "The Only Girl in  
e Car," August 1996]. Debased  
omen used as symbols for loneli-  
ss, isolation, and detachment are  
ways great for the sexual fantasies  
intellectual poseurs.

e Pinkelman  
ng Beach, Calif.

With good serious fiction out there,  
y would *Harper's Magazine* waste  
story slot with "Tina in the Back-  
at"? Although well-written, this bit  
male-fantasy puffery is indistin-  
ishable from hundreds of anecdotes  
the sex magazines, with the excep-  
n that we didn't even get the sex  
ene. The story has no plot, no sig-  
ificant exploration of either charac-  
r or of the relation between charac-  
rs, and no interesting theme  
arding the homeless, Native Amer-  
ans, pickup sex, or anything else.  
I was also disappointed with the  
called Watts riot memoir ["While  
atts Burned," June]. Don Wallace

Continued on page 82

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# NOTEBOOK

## The life By Lewis H. Lapham

*There are two things that are important in politics. The first one is money, and I can't remember what the second one is.*

—Mark Hanna

Throughout the month of July the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs conducted an investigation of the ways in which President Clinton raised money for last year's election campaign, and it was like listening to gardeners discuss the beauty of compost. Here at last was the most important subject in the world—loftier than budgets, grander than impeachments, more serious than bombs. For once the senators looked interested in the proceedings. What they were talking about was their lifework, their profession, their noble art, and they weren't about to be trifled with by mere pretenders and clumsy amateurs. Over the course of many years the sixteen members of the committee probably had collected an aggregate sum well in excess of \$200 million for their own campaigns and those of their friends, and they knew all the moves—every nuance of obsequious gesture, every turn of wheedling phrase, which smiles were easy and which were not, when to sneer and how to crawl, whom to snub and what to kiss.

The rules of political fund-raising lately have become as complicated as the rules of etiquette that governed the comings and goings of Louis XIV's courtiers at the palace of Versailles, and while watching C-SPAN's montage of the testimony in the Hart Office Building I noticed that the committee's questions were better understood not as requests for infor-

mation but as occasions for tart lectures in conduct and deportment. The witnesses were often awkward or nervous, below-stairs functionaries of little breeding and less taste whom one wouldn't hope to see standing around a punch bowl or a public trough. But the senators were upscale public servants, like French governesses or British butlers, and one knew that they could be counted upon never to confuse a Guatemalan valet with the ambassador from Egypt or Pakistan. They understood the fine distinctions between clean money and soiled money—between money that was as sweet as fresh milk and money gone sour in the sun, between money that could be followed and money that got lost in traffic, between companionable money and money that walked alone—and always it was instructive to listen to them display their knowledge of a subject to which they clearly gave their every waking thought. From their commentaries I learned what I'm sure will prove to be a useful set of lessons on that far-off, happy day when I hit the New York State lottery and can afford to buy a really expensive politician of my own.

On the first day of the hearing the members of the committee introduced themselves to the C-SPAN television audience with brief statements of uplifting principle. Something was wrong with the American system of government (too much money wandering around Washington off the leash of moral scruple), and the senators had come to set matters right, "searchers after truth"

(Senator Joseph Lieberman, I Conn.) seeking to address at the "historic moment" the questions "our nation's basic sovereignty" (Senator Pete Domenici, I N.Mex.) in order to "enhance government in the eyes of the American people at a time when our government sorely needs it" (Senator Fred Thompson, R., Tenn.) and suppress the "desire to compromise the policy of the United States" to use money as a lever of power (Senator Robert G. Torricelli, N.J.) by pledging "our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor toward improving this democratic system which so many young Americans have given their lives" (Senator McClelland, D., Ga.).

Every loyal and golden phrase serving of a loyal and golden contribution, and all of them as finely shaped to their purpose as the instrument with which dentists draw teeth from widowers and shepherds wool from sheep. But as at any other fund-raising event, the senators were careful not to linger too long among the obligatory pleasantries, and after getting past the diversion of a sinister Chinese plot meant to sway last year's presidential election (the nominal pretext for the hearings but one for which nobody could offer any credible proof) they came at last to the subject dearest to their hearts—how to remove the stain from money that at first glance might seem too spoiled to be passed at the end of a pole to the fastidious constants making the advertising buy for NBC or Disney. The proper procedures were more complicated than the



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looked, and in the 1996 election campaign President Clinton's fund-raising cadres—panic-stricken, desperate for cash, hounded by Dick Morris—had cut corners and made mistakes. Stupid mistakes. Careless and unnecessary mistakes. The kind of mistakes that were likely to get everybody in trouble.

The tone of the questioning was impatient and exasperated. It wasn't that the senators objected to shaking down corporate lobbyists with threats of stringent regulatory legislation, or to selling high-quality "face time" at whatever price the market would bear (a practice that accounted for their presence in Washington), but there was a right way and a wrong way to do these things, and the Democrats had gotten out of hand. Out of hand and well beyond the bounds of propriety.

The first witness, Richard Sullivan, looked like a college cheerleader—thirty-three years old, handsome, likable, and genuinely confused. He had served as finance director to the Democratic National Committee during the hectic summer of 1996, and quite clearly he didn't know very much about steam-cleaning the dingier bundles of campaign money. His testimony took up the better part of three days, the committee gradually coming to regard him as "a good soldier" who had been led astray. Several senators took the trouble to intersperse their reprimands with helpful hints. Yes, it was perfectly appropriate to speak to foreign nationals (even to Chinese arms dealers and Indonesian billionaires) if the conversation took place on public television and one was wearing a suit from which all the pockets had been removed. But it was never correct to be seen alone at lunch with a foreign national among the ferns in the "infamous Four Seasons hotel." A well-bred finance chairman, whether Democrat or Republican, doesn't accept wire transfers directly from German or Chinese banks, but if the money is first sent to an American bank and there outfitted with a new checking account, a new name, and a hat from L. L. Bean, then even the most high-minded finance chairman can take it across K Street to meet Newt Gingrich or Vice President Gore. "Face time" brings a higher price when sold as a boutique item, in very small quantities, to two

or three contributors in golf carts.

Never give or take money on government property. Only louts blunder onto Air Force One or into the Library of Congress with a check or cash in hand. Say that I have \$50,000 to spend, and that it is the President of the United States on whom I wish to make a favorable impression. First I attend the coffee ceremony in the Map Room of the White House, and there with maybe ten or twenty other guests I praise the coffee, listen to the President talk about Bosnia or poor people or his golf swing, eat no more than one Danish pastry, remark that the Map Room must have been a swell and exciting place in President Roosevelt's time (because he was using the maps to chart the course of World War II), praise the President (on any pretext that comes to mind), sip the coffee, compliment all the other people in the room (for their youth and vigor, never for their clothes or their jewels), inquire about the chance of rain, rise gracefully when a bell rings and the President is called away, praise the usher in the Marine uniform (not the steward in the white coat), walk proudly out of the building along the line of march indicated by the doorkeepers, praise the coffee once again (to anybody still within earshot), and so regain the anonymity of a common thoroughfare or public street. Then and only then is it permissible to write the check, which can be handed (in an envelope either blank or engraved) to a nearby aide-de-camp, who will carry it gingerly around the perimeter of the White House (being very, very careful not to step on the driveway or the lawn) to an office of the Democratic National Committee, where women in flowered dresses spray it with eau de cologne.

Similar courtesies and protocols must be observed when purchasing lesser politicians, among them all the senators on the committee, but circumstances vary, and the formalities occasionally can be abbreviated. Say that I happen to be riding in a car with a senator from Utah or a congressman from Texas, and that I wish to express my appreciation for his or her selfless

and devoted service to the American people and/or an endangered rabbit. No coffee is at hand and no Map Room, but unless we happen to be driving through a military base or Indian reservation, it is permissible to hand the check to the senator's assistant, even to stuff it into the assistant's pocket with a hearty laugh or a friendly nudge.

Sometimes a check must precede one's appearance at a dinner in the Library of Congress or the Museum of American History. The committee arranging the tables sends the bill in the form of an invitation, thoughtfully enclosing a schedule of fees matched to the available seating—\$5,000 for a chair among the nonentities, \$20,000 for a place on the dais, \$50,000 for a photograph with the senator and I, a prize fish, \$100,000 for everything on the list and a glass of champagne at the reception before the speech. The check need not be hand-delivered. The U.S. Postal Service doesn't con- sider it under the rule about government property, and if left to cure for three or four days in a worn canvas mailbag, the check loses the stench of a rich man's hand.

Clearly what troubled the committee, most especially the members of the Republican majority who had forced the holding of the inquiry, was not the question of reforming the campaign-finance laws (all agreed that the existing laws were ineffectual and none of which the senators sought to change or amend) but the far more important question of keeping up appearances. Some of the country's better-known politicians among them President Clinton, had forgotten how to behave in public company; they were slovenly and tactless and rude, and if they didn't improve their manners, the voters and taxpayers (i.e., the common people to whom one must always set a good example) might form a poor impression of politics, even to the point of thinking, as Senator Cleland so forcibly reminded everybody, that "it's time to face the situation that we can place a 'For Sale' sign on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue." A terrible thought of course, un-American and coated with poisonous cynicism, but understandable in light of some of the ne-



ports that had been seeping out of Washington like methane gas. (Which was why Senator Don Nickles, Okla.) didn't think it was funny, even the least bit amusing, when he showed Finance Director Sullivan a copy of the 1994 memorandum from a special assistant to the general chairman of the DNC to an operative in the office of the White House deputy chief of staff) seeming to suggest that certain people in the Clinton Administration mistook a presidential election for a yard sale or a flea. The senator peevishly tapped his pencil while Finance Director Sullivan examined the document:

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9. Six radio address spots
10. Photo opportunities with the principals
11. Two places per week at the Presidential CEO lunches
12. Phone time from the Vice President
13. Ten places per month at White House film showings
14. One lunch with Mack McLarty per month
15. One lunch with Ira Magaziner per month
16. One lunch with the First Lady per month
17. Use of the President's Box at the Warner Theater and at Wolf Trap
18. Ability to reserve time on the White House tennis courts
19. Meeting time with Vice President Gore

When Sullivan completed his review of the document, he looked up at the row of frowning senators with a puzzled smile, as if wondering what it was that he might have missed. He already had explained, at least five or six times, that the activities in question (among them the notorious "White House coffees" suspected of taking in \$27 million) never were sold like football tickets; they were encouragements meant to "energize" prospective donors to the Democratic cause.

"Well?" said Senator Nickles.

"Well?" said Finance Director Sullivan, still unsure of the senator's point. "So it was a pretty successful fundraising effort?"

Sullivan's nervousness relaxed into a boyish grin.

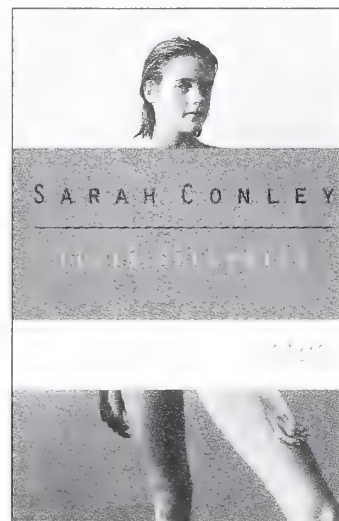
"It sure as hell was, Senator."

A brief splutter of laughter at the back of the room was quickly extinguished by the grim and bipartisan silence on the elected side of the microphones. As still as sixteen stones, the committee stared at Sullivan as if looking at a vulgar cousin to whom nobody could remember being related, and it was left to Senator Nickles to suppress the display of idle mirth:

"I am glad that some people think this is funny."

Which, at least from the committee's standpoint, it most certainly was not. Intent upon keeping up their own prices, the members had gone to a good deal of trouble to stage the hearing—at a cost of \$4.3 million, \$700,000 more than the White House spent entertaining its guests during the whole of President Clinton's first term—in order to prove (to the C-SPAN audience, to the editors of the *Washington Post*, to any corporation with a loose \$250,000 to spend) that they retained their value as high-end merchandise. The market in politicians wasn't doing all that well lately, not when compared to the stock market or the \$772,500 paid for President Kennedy's old golf clubs, and it surely would be a sad day in America—sad for its "searchers after truth," for its "basic sovereignty," for "the democratic system for which so many young Americans have given their lives"—when a fine-looking senator from Tennessee didn't fetch as handsome a price as a dress discarded by Princess Di. ■

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# HARPER'S INDEX

- Chance that an American knows that direct corporate contributions to political campaigns are illegal : 1 in 25
- Chance that a subpoena issued by the House campaign-finance committee went to a Republican : 1 in 20
- Amount that current campaign-finance investigations have cost the DNC in legal and clerical fees : \$7,000,000
- Amount of "questionable" contributions the DNC has subsequently been forced to return : \$2,800,000
- Rank of the 104th, among Congresses elected since 1984, in use of the word "scum" while in session : 1
- Number of Supreme Court decisions over which Justices Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia disagreed last term : 1
- Percentage change in black students admitted to Berkeley Law School since California banned affirmative action : -81
- Number of the 14 black students that the school admitted this year who have decided not to attend : 14
- Percentage change since 1986 in the number of computer-sciences degrees conferred in the United States : -42
- Chance that a kilowatt hour of electricity used in the U.S. last year was generated from a renewable resource : 1 in 9
- Number of the 23 species seriously depleted by the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* spill that have recovered : 1
- Number of trout and perch dumped into Russia's Lake Ukshe last July for Boris Yeltsin's fishing trip : 10,000
- Average number of Russian soldiers who committed suicide each week last year : 10
- Number of suicide notes found in a North Carolina inmate's cell the day before his scheduled execution last April : 2
- Hours before the scheduled execution that he was granted an indefinite stay for "psychiatric evaluation" : 16
- Estimated number of quadriplegics attending U.S. medical schools : 10
- Percentage change since 1990 in the number of U.S. college students studying to be morticians : +45
- Number of languages taught in U.S. colleges and universities that were not taught there 10 years ago : 36
- Number of languages taught 10 years ago that are not taught today : 15
- Ratio of public-school children to PTA members : 7:1
- Percentage of Tupperware's profits accounted for by overseas sales : 85
- Chance that a soccer ball was made by a Pakistani child : 1 in 7
- Ratio of Americans who oppose NAFTA expansion to the number who voted for Bill Clinton last year : 3:1
- Percentage change since the passage of NAFTA in the average hourly wage of a Mexican maquiladora worker : -30
- Percentage change since then in U.S. companies' domestic sales of products assembled in Mexico : +133
- Average amount the Pentagon estimates that NATO's expansion will cost the U.S. over the next decade : \$1,750,000,000
- Average amount the Congressional Budget Office estimates it will cost : \$11,850,000,000
- Annual amount the U.S. government spends to maintain a one-acre medicinal-marijuana farm in Mississippi : \$250,000
- Rank of adults under 30 and those over 70 among the age groups most in favor of making cigarettes illegal : 2,1
- Estimated gun sales prevented by background checks before the Supreme Court made them nonmandatory last July : 250,000
- Number of former or sitting Chicago aldermen convicted of a federal crime in the last 25 years : 22
- Number of the 327 eligible voters who voted in the Rock Creek, Kansas, school board election last April : 0
- Percentage of U.S. counties in which no homicides were committed by juveniles last year : 84
- Chance that a U.S. prison inmate over the age of 55 has been incarcerated for less than a year : 1 in 4
- Percentage change since 1987 in the number of expert witnesses listed by the nation's largest referral service : +140
- Percentage change since last year in the number of suits filed against manufacturers of latex : +700
- Gallons of makeup remover used by the Broadway cast of *Cats* since the show opened in 1982 : 225
- Estimated number of changes made to James Joyce's *Ulysses* for a "people's edition" published last June : 9,000
- Rank of Ringo among ex-Beatles who have toured most often in the last decade : 1

*Figure's cited have been adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of July 1997. Sources are listed on page 79.  
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"Hey, hello  
down there."



"Hey, hello  
down there."



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# READINGS

[Account]

## SNOWED BY THE CIA

*From "My Years with the CIA," by George C. Herring, in the May issue of the Organization of American Historians Newsletter. Herring teaches history at the University of Kentucky.*

When I was first asked to serve on the Central Intelligence Agency's Historical Review Panel back in the summer of 1990, I felt quite positive about the assignment. The panel had been created in 1984 in a spirit of openness, and I was enthused to be taking part in the process of bringing long-hidden records to light. Since the Cold War was over, I felt there was good reason to assume that those agencies that had been on its front lines might now begin to release some of their voluminous records for public study. As it was explained to me, our job was to work with the CIA's history staff to determine what materials might be ready for declassification.

My first meeting, in August of 1990 (just about the time Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait) at the agency headquarters in Langley, Virginia, held a glimpse of things to come. Shortly after we arrived, we were asked to give our plane tickets and other expense receipts to some individuals who had just entered the room. They soon returned and handed us the requisite plain brown envelopes filled with cash. During the day we were forbidden to go

to the rest room without being escorted by one of our hosts. We were "briefed" by various officials, and then, after a day's deliberations, we made a number of initial recommendations.

We urged the declassification of selected operational files, particularly those concerning major covert operations, such as the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco, the 1954 Guatemalan coup, and the 1953 coup that installed the Shah of Iran. We also called for the creation of a central inventory of CIA files. (We learned that there was no such thing, that compartmentalizing records was one means of shielding them from disclosure.) I can't speak for the others on the panel, but I left Langley that day with a wad of cash in my pocket and a feeling that if we had not conquered new worlds we had at least taken that proverbial first step in the journey of a thousand miles.

Some important developments over the next few years seemed to confirm my initial optimism. In a celebrated speech in February 1992, then CIA Director Robert Gates conceded that the agency had not lived up to the openness promised in 1984. This was the result, Gates said, of limited resources and, most important, "rigid agency policies and procedures heavily biased toward denial of declassification." Gates promised that things would change, and the following year his successor, R. James Woolsey, publicly acknowledged the existence of eleven covert operations and vowed that documents concerning them would soon be released.

Meanwhile, our work on the panel told a dif-



[Questionnaire]

## RESEARCH OR RACISM?

*From a questionnaire given this spring to African American women in New York City as part of a breast-cancer study being conducted by the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Participants in the study were asked to respond to several surveys; the cultural survey excerpted below was criticized in the Amsterdam News, a weekly newspaper published in Harlem, for being "racially offensive" and irrelevant to breast-cancer research. Sloan-Kettering defended its use of the questionnaire, which was developed by an interracial team of researchers and culled from a study originally published in the Journal of Black Psychology, saying that African-American women die of breast cancer at a rate far greater than white women, and that "cultural traditions, values, and beliefs" may affect a woman's willingness to seek medical care. Respondents were asked if they "totally disagree," "sort of agree," or "strongly agree" with the statements below.*

I feel more comfortable around blacks than around whites.  
I know how to play bid whist.  
I listen to black radio stations.  
I read (or used to read) *Essence* magazine.  
I try to watch all black shows on TV.  
The person I admire the most is black.  
When I pass a black stranger on the street, I always say hello or nod to him or her.  
Deep in their hearts, most white people are racists.  
I.Q. tests purposely discriminate against black people.  
There are many types of blood, such as "high," "low," "thin," and "bad" blood.  
I was taught that you shouldn't take a bath and then go outside.  
I believe that some people know how to use voodoo.  
Some old black women know how to cure diseases.  
If doctors can't cure you, you should try going to a root doctor or to your minister.  
When I was young, I was a member of a black church.  
The biggest insult is an insult to your mother.  
I went to mostly black schools.  
Dancing was an important part of my childhood.  
I usually add salt to my food to make it taste better.  
I save grease from cooking to use it again later.  
I eat chitlins once in a while.

ferent story. We met at the whim of the agency, and during the time that I served, we must have set some kind of record for inactivity. Between August 1990 and June 1994—a period of tremendous activity in the area of declassification in other departments and agencies—our panel did not meet. At the same time, declassification was excruciatingly slow. When the CIA did publish documents (often miscellaneous documents and articles that didn't amount to anything of substance), it refused to include citations, thus making it extremely difficult to track down related materials.

Somehow, though, the agency was able to conduct a brilliant public-relations snow job. When I'd bump into people in and outside academia, I was frequently told how terrific it was that the CIA was moving toward openness. Even more galling to me personally, when the issue of releasing CIA records came up at historical conferences, CIA representatives would proudly point out that the agency had an advisory committee on which three prominent historians, including myself, sat. Now, I'm from Kentucky, and I'm not supposed to be swift, but it didn't

take me long to realize that I was being used to cover the agency's ass.

**I**n June 1994, the panel finally met again. After a series of briefings, we made recommendations that were almost a carbon copy of those we had made in 1990: that the agency create a central inventory of its records and that it initiate a systematic program of declassification. I drafted the report and submitted it. I never heard who, if anyone, saw the report or what disposition, if any, was made of it.

To make ourselves more relevant, we also recommended that the panel meet on a more regular basis and play some role in its ostensible tasks. Remarkably, though it took two years, meetings were held in February and August of 1996, and on each occasion CIA Director John Deutch met with our group. At least in an administrative sense, this represented real progress.

In terms of influence, however, it was hard to measure any change. Promises were still being made regarding documents on the acknowledged covert operations, but as yet there had been no releases. (We later learned that, regarding the 1953 Iran coup, nearly 100 percent of the files had been destroyed.)

In addition, the CIA's response to a 1995 executive order requiring agencies to meet minimum levels of declassification was less than reassuring. I can still vividly recall a display projected on a screen during the February meeting that measured unreleased agency documents in terms of the height of several Washington Monuments. We were told that of the



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*"Landscape with Cooling Towers near Liverpool, England," by Bob Hower. His work is currently on display at Galer Hertz in Louisville, Kentucky, where Hower lives.*

165 million pages of pre-1975 agency records, the CIA would seek exemptions from declassification for 106 million—roughly 64 percent of the total.

Officials continued to insist that protection of sources and methods made it impossible to consider the release of operational files of any age. In an especially chilling moment, one troglodyte from the Directorate of Operations referred to the executive order as that "silly old law." When asked whether it would be necessary to withhold secret materials from the American Revolution because of sources and methods, he said no, probably not, but on the other hand he could not set a date before which documents could be released.

Then, shortly after the August meeting, we were informed that the three of us who had been with the panel from the early years were being removed. Term limits were being established. Although I cannot prove that this change was designed to get rid of troublemakers or eliminate the expertise that some of us had gained, I'd be willing to bet it's no coincidence that years of ex-

perience and institutional memory were removed at a most critical time in the process of declassification.

Looking back and trying to be fair, I must concede that there has been slight progress. The CIA has at least released some material, including finished intelligence documents and some materials required under the JFK Assassination Records Collection Act. This spring, the agency declassified some 1,400 pages of documents from the Guatemala coup (although these represent less than 1 percent of CIA files on the incident). If nothing else, these releases establish a precedent.

The main problem, as Director Gates noted in 1992, remains the culture of secrecy that has pervaded the agency since its founding. Can it change? Perhaps, but substantive change requires pressure from the outside—namely, the threat of congressional intrusion into CIA affairs—and pressure within the bureaucracy itself, from the top down. So far, officials at Langley seem to have decided that an agency desperate-



ly searching for a post-Cold War mission and wracked with huge internal problems should spend its political capital in areas other than the potentially troublesome matter of declassification.

My years with the CIA have not left me optimistic. Rather than feeling that a new era of openness is upon us—and that I've helped pave the way for scholars and citizens to study material that might help them understand the hidden drives of U.S. foreign policy—my time at the agency has taught me a very different lesson, one about the limitless ability of bureaucracy to frustrate change.

[Recruitment Strategy]

## CALLING THE SPIES IN FROM THE COLD

*From the transcript of a June 3 interview with Russian Federal Security Service director Nikolay Kovalev on Boris Notkin Invites, a weekly program on a local Moscow television channel. The FSS is the former KGB.*

**BORIS NOTKIN:** Good evening, dear viewers. We are here with Colonel General Nikolay Dimitriyevich Kovalev, director of the Federal Security Service. Nikolay Dimitriyevich, you have said that some professionals are coming back to the FSS, but I have heard the opposite, that there is a very serious problem in the FSS, which is that the middle ranks—majors, colonels, and lieutenant colonels—have left and there is no one to pass on traditions to the young staff. Do you intend to counteract this problem in any way?

**NIKOLAY KOVALEV:** I think that the process of dealing with this problem is already in motion and is quite intensive. We approach these cases one by one, but the process is in motion. And, I repeat, it is an intensive one.

**NOTKIN:** I know that the military counterintelligence officers have not been getting their pay for three to four months at a time, although they live and operate in very difficult conditions. I cannot see how you are going to attract people to military counterintelligence. This is something that requires a very high degree of professionalism, after all.

**KOVALEV:** Of course, there are complications and difficulties, and you describe them most accurately. But all the same, I repeat once more that the process is in motion.

Presently we are working on exposing

Russians who are working as active agents for the secret services of other states. They are already in our sights. In the last three months we have exposed two [individuals selling state secrets], and more will be exposed in the near future.

Today I would like to make an unusual offer to those Russians working for the secret services of foreign states. I ask them to contact Russian counterintelligence and work for the good of their country. And we guarantee . . .

[Congressional Record]

## IDENTITY POLITICS

*From the transcript of the June 20 session of the House of Representatives.*

**REPRESENTATIVE VIC FAZIO (D., Calif.):** Mr. Speaker, I yield my time to the gentleman from Texas, the majority leader, for the purpose of inquiring about the schedule for next week.

**REPRESENTATIVE RICHARD ARMEY (R., Tex.):** Mr. Speaker, before proceeding to the House schedule, I would like to have everyone's attention for a very important announcement.

Last night my son and my lovely daughter-in-law graced me with a new little fishing buddy. David and Laurie Arney became the proud parents of a beautiful baby boy, my first grandson, my first grandchild, as yet without a name. And even though I am not a registered lobbyist, I would like to make a pitch to the new parents: Richard. It's a great name, a name of kings, presidents, race-car drivers, and country-music singers. I would hope that the distinguished minority leader [Representative Richard Gephardt (D., Mo.)] would join me in this lobbying effort to add one more Richard to this world.

**FAZIO:** Reclaiming my time, I would certainly like to indicate that I will intercede, and the gentleman from Texas has my commitment to help him in the lobbying for another little Richard.

**ARMEY:** I thank the gentleman for his timely reminder of even one more classification: pop singers named Richard. And I encourage people to understand the importance of the name Richard in the lives of little children.



NOVAKIN. As double agents.

KOVALEV: Perfectly correct. We are asking them, if you wish to use that term, to become double agents. We guarantee their security. And they can keep the financial incentives they receive from foreign counterintelligence services. Professionals of the highest class will work with them. I guarantee that. There are operators waiting for those telephone calls on 224-3500. Please call.

[Rumination]

## NOTES ON WRITING AND THE NATION

By novelist Salman Rushdie, in the twenty-fifth anniversary issue of *Index on Censorship*, published in May. Rushdie is the author, most recently, of *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

### 1.

The Ousel singing in the woods of Cilgwri,  
Tirelessly as a stream over the mossed stones,  
Is not so old as the toad of Cors Fochno  
Who feels the cold skin sagging round his bones.

Few writers are as profoundly engaged with their native land as R. S. Thomas, a Welsh nationalist, whose poems seek, by noticing, arguing, rhapsodizing, mythologizing, to write the nation into fierce, lyrical being. Yet this same R. S. Thomas also writes:

Hate takes a long time  
To grow in, and mine  
Has increased from birth;  
Not for the brute earth . . .  
...I find  
This hate's for my own kind . . .

Startling to find an admission of something close to self-hatred in the lines of a national bard. Yet this perhaps is the only kind of nationalist . . . nationalist . . . a writer can be. When the imagination is given sight by passion, it sees darkness as well as light. To feel so ferociously is to feel contempt as well as pride, hatred as well as love. These proud contempts, this hating love, often earn the writer a nation's wrath. The nation requires anthems, flags. The poet offers discord. Rags.

### 2.

Connections have been made between the historical development of the twin "narratives" of the novel and the nation-state. The progress of a story through its pages toward its goal is likened to the self-image of the nation, moving

through history toward its manifest destiny. Appealing as such a parallel is, I take it, these days, with a pinch of salt.

Eleven years ago, at the famous PEN congress in New York City, the world's writers discussed "The Imagination of the Writer and the Imagination of the State," a subject of Mailerian grandeur, dreamed up, of course, by Norman Mailer. Striking how many ways there were to read that little "and." For many of us, it meant "versus."

South African writers—Gordimer, Coetzee—in those days of apartheid set themselves against the official definition of the nation. Rescuing, perhaps, the true nation from those who held it captive. Other writers were more in tune with their nations. John Updike's unforgettable little hymn of praise to the little mailboxes of America, emblems, for him, of the free transmission of ideas. Danilo Kiš's example of a "joke" by the state: a letter, received by him in Paris, posted in what was then still Yugoslavia. Inside the sealed envelope, stamped on the first page, were the words "This letter has not been censored."

### 3.

The nation either co-opts its greatest writers (Shakespeare, Goethe, Camoëns, Tagore) or else seeks to destroy them (Ovid's exile, Soyinka's exile). Both fates are problematic. The hush of reverence is inappropriate for literature; great writing makes a great noise in the mind, the heart. There are those who believe that persecution is good for writers. This is false.

### 4.

Beware the writer who sets himself or herself up as the voice of a nation. This includes nations of race, gender, sexual orientation, elective affinity. This is the New Behalfism. Beware behalfies! The New Behalfism demands uplift, accentuates the positive, offers stirring moral instruction. It abhors the tragic sense of life. Seeing literature as inescapably political, it replaces literary values by political ones.

It is the murderer of thought. Beware!

### 5.

Be advised my passport's green. America I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel. To forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.

Kadare's Albania, Ivo Andrić's Bosnia, Achebe's Nigeria, García Márquez's Colombia, Jorge Amado's Brazil.

Writers are unable to deny the lure of the nation, its tides in our blood. Writing as mapping: the cartography of the imagination. (Or,







[Poem]

## THE END AND THE BEGINNING

*By Wisława Szymborska, in the Summer issue of The Threepenny Review. Szymborska, who won the 1996 Nobel Prize for Literature, lives in Kraków, Poland. Translated from the Polish by Joanna Trzeciak.*

After every war  
someone has to clean up  
Things won't  
straighten themselves up, after all.

Someone has to push the rubble  
to the sides of the road,  
so the corpse-laden wagons  
can pass.

Someone has to get mired  
in scum and ashes,  
sofa springs,  
splintered glass,  
and bloody rags.

Someone must drag in a girder  
to prop up a wall.  
Someone must glaze a window,  
rehang a door.

Photogenic it's not,  
and takes years.  
All the cameras have left  
for another war.

Again we'll need bridges  
and new railway stations.  
Sleeves will go ragged  
from rolling them up.

Someone, broom in hand,  
still recalls how it was.  
Someone listens  
and nods with unsevered head.  
Yet others milling about  
already find it dull.

From behind the bush  
sometimes someone still unearths  
rust-eaten arguments  
and carries them to the garbage pile.

Those who knew  
what was going on here  
must give way to  
those who know little.  
And less than little.  
And finally as little as nothing.

In the grass which has overgrown  
causes and effects,  
someone must be stretched out,  
blade of grass in his mouth,  
gazing at the clouds.

as modern critical theory might spell it, *Imagi/Nation*.) In the best writing, however, a map of a nation will also turn out to be a map of the world.

6.

History has become debatable. In the aftermath of Empire, in the age of superpower, under the "footprint" of the partisan simplifications beamed down to us from satellites, we can no longer easily agree on what is the case, let alone what it might mean. Literature steps into this ring. Historians, media moguls, politicians do not care for the intruder, but the intruder is a stubborn sort. In this ambiguous atmosphere, upon this trampled earth, in these muddy waters, there is work for him to do.

7.

Nationalism corrupts writers, too. Vide Limonov's poisonous interventions in the war in the former Yugoslavia. In a time of ever more narrowly defined nationalisms, of walled-in tribalisms, writers will be found uttering the war cries of their tribes.

Closed systems have always appealed to writers. This is why so much writing deals with prisons, police forces, hospitals, schools. Is the nation a closed system? In this internationalized moment, can any system remain closed?

Nationalism is that "revolt against history" that seeks to close what cannot any longer be closed. To fence in what should be frontierless. Good writing assumes a frontierless nation. Writers who serve frontiers have become border guards.

8.

If writing turns repeatedly toward nation, it just as repeatedly turns away. The deliberately uprooted intellectual (Naipaul) views the world as only a free intelligence can, going where the action is and offering reports. The intellectual uprooted against his will (a category that includes, these days, a high proportion of the finest Arab writers) rejects, too, the narrow enclosures that have rejected him. There is great loss, and much yearning, in such rootlessness. But there is also gain. The frontierless nation is not a fantasy.

9.

Much great writing has no need of the public dimension. Its agony comes from within. The public sphere is as nothing to Elizabeth Bishop. Her prison—her freedom—her subject is elsewhere.

Lullaby.

Let nations rage,

Let nations fall.

The shadow of the crib makes an enormous cage  
upon the wall.





This photograph of plebes on induction day at the United States Naval Academy was taken by Arlington, Virginia, artist Pete Souza. It was part of *America Observed*, an exhibit displayed in June at the 92nd Street Y in New York City.

[Study]

## TRIALS AND THEIR TRIBULATIONS

From "The Occupational Hazards of Jury Duty," by Dr. Stanley M. Kaplan and Carolyn Winget, in Volume 20, Number 3 of *The Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, published in Bloomfield, Connecticut.

**J**urors, especially those serving on criminal trials, carry a heavy burden of responsibility. They can feel that the defendant's future, indeed even his or her life, is in their hands. The significant stresses that arise under these circumstances can lead to a variety of physical and psychological disturbances, yet few reports of these effects on jurors have been cited in medical literature.

The degree of stress jurors experience depends upon a number of factors: the trial's duration, whether or not the trial involves a death sentence, the nature of the testimony, and the evidence presented, to name just a few.

We studied the juries of four criminal trials—

two for murder, one for child abuse, and one for pandering obscene videotapes. Of the forty jurors we interviewed, twenty-seven had one or more physical and/or psychological symptoms that could be related to jury duty.

Sleeplessness was the most frequent complaint, experienced by thirteen of the forty jurors. Six jurors developed headaches; four experienced heart palpitations; four became depressed; four became anorexic; and two experienced faintness. The following overt illnesses also occurred.

*Peptic Ulcer and Hives:* Mrs. T., a forty-year-old woman on the child-abuse jury, aggravated a long-dormant peptic ulcer and developed hives during the testimony of children purportedly abused at a summer camp. Throughout the trial, she carefully weighed every shred of evidence. Meanwhile, she questioned the interest, intelligence, and sincerity of the other jurors, and consequently felt that much of the burden of the outcome rested upon her shoulders.

Her hives occurred during the cross-examination of the children.

I started itching. I thought, "There are fleas in the courtroom," and I really meant it. Next thing I



knew I was full of hives. I've never had a hive in my life. As soon as the trial was over, I never had another one.

*Elevated Blood Pressure:* Mrs. Y., a sixty-three-year-old woman who served on the murder trial of a man

[Strategy]

## THIS CURSED HOUSE

*From a list of tips for people who are seeking to sell "stigmatized" properties, by Randall Bell, a real-estate analyst based in Santa Monica, California. Bell specializes in evaluating properties where tragedies have occurred; his clients have included the owners of Nicole Brown Simpson's condominium and of the Heaven's Gate mansion.*

*Manage tourists and sightseers.* Properties where tragedies have occurred are often marked by police tape, signs, and other "flags." These should be removed as soon as possible. If, despite the removal, sightseers still find the property, be polite. Short-tempered behavior often amplifies sightseers' curiosity and actually prolongs their visit.

*Remember that the stigma of a tragedy sticks to the site, not the building.* A stigmatized property will suffer just as much with a new building as with the original. Bulldozing a building will not fool anyone and can actually be seen as an admission of utter defeat. A property should be bulldozed only in the most extreme circumstances.

*Occupy the property.* Even a tenant paying a below-market rental rate is beneficial. Generally, a vacant property only worsens the site's stigma.

*Wait an appropriate amount of time before listing the property.* It can take years to sell a stigmatized property. Owners who recognize this fact avoid the frustration that comes with trying to unload a property prematurely. If litigation is involved, it is usually best to wait until all trials are over before listing a property.

*Be prepared to discount the price appropriately.* Even after everything possible has been done to mitigate the damages, market resistance may remain. The offer of a modest discount can entice a buyer to purchase the property. It's important to keep the situation in perspective. While detrimental conditions can be traumatic, there is generally an inverse relationship between the time that has transpired since the incident and the amount you need to discount the property.

who killed his former girlfriend and her new suitor, was carried out of the jury room on a stretcher because of chest pain linked to hypertension. She developed the pain during a five-day sequestration in which one of the jurors was unwilling to sentence the defendant to the electric chair.

*Post-trial Chills, Fever, and Depression:* Mrs. J., a thirty-eight-year-old member of the same jury, steadfastly held out against the death penalty, which had been agreed upon by all other jurors. Ultimately, she went into the jurors' bathroom, where she could study the trial data alone. She emerged several hours later and reluctantly agreed to assign the death penalty.

Interestingly, when she was ten, Mrs. J.'s father was killed by a man who lived with their family. While in a drunken stupor, this man hit her elderly father with a lead pipe. Mrs. J. concedes that the trial "must have affected me more than some of the others."

After the trial, she was bedridden for three days and has since exhibited symptoms of depression and fatigue. Although she ordinarily became excited about Christmas, this year she did not. She reported that anything that reminded her of the trial made her tearful.

*Sexual Inhibition:* Mrs. L., a thirty-nine-year-old juror in the pornography trial, was so disturbed by the highly erotic nature of the videotapes she was forced to watch that it affected her sexual responses to her husband.

Like when we go to bed, and he wants to make love to me. Well, just for a second I see a part of one of the movies. I have to shake it off. . . . [The movies] just made it so unclean and so dirty in my mind. . . . My husband said, "Come on, dear, this is your husband, the man you love." . . . I hope this goes away after a while. . . . Just even talking about the trial, it brings back everything.

*Phobic Reaction:* Miss I., an eighteen-year-old juror in the trial of a door-to-door salesman accused of killing a teenage girl, developed a transient phobia of bathrooms. The body of the murder victim had been found on the bathroom floor.

When I'd go to bathrooms, especially strange people's bathrooms, I'd freak out. I can't explain it. I'd picture her [the victim] lying on the bathroom floor. It used to happen to me when I was home. . . . For a while, I'd make someone go with me—my sister—in a public bathroom.

*Anxiety and Increased Alcohol Intake:* Mrs. K., a forty-one-year-old juror on the same murder trial, experienced intense anxiety during the trial. She had clearly identified with the victim. She found the defendant attractive and realized that she, too, could have invited him into her own home. Her symptoms became so disabling that she visited her physician, who prescribed seda-



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[Ranking]

## THE GREAT WRITERS, IN BATS PER BELFRY

From a table included in "Verbal Creativity, Depression, and Alcoholism: An Investigation of One Hundred American and British Writers," by Dr. Felix Post, in volume 168 of *The British Journal of Psychiatry*. In order to rank various male writers according to psychopathology, Post gathered data from biographies and then gave each writer "penalty points" for "dysfunctional traits" such as substance abuse, depression, and psychosexual problems. He found that, "against expectation, poets were somewhat less burdened [by psychopathology] than prose fiction and especially play writers."

### PENALTY POINTS FOR PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Bryant Holmes	Orwell Peacock	Browning Conrad S. Crane Dickens Galsworthy Hardy Housman Huxley H. James Kipling Longfellow Melville Shaw Stevens Trollope Whitman Wordsworth Yeats	Arnold Barrie Chesterton Cooper Cummings Frost Graves Hopkins Hughes Jarrell Lawrence Maugham Sandburg Stevenson Tennyson Thoreau Wells Wilde Wilder	Anderson Auden Eliot Hawthorne London Pound Thackeray Wolfe	Hemingway Joyce Lewis Lowell O'Neill Poe Robinson Roethke D. Thomas	Berryman H. Crane Faulkner Fitzgerald Waugh T. Williams

tives. In addition, Mrs. K.'s use of alcohol increased substantially during the trial and continued thereafter.

I was screaming in my sleep, dreaming I was on the courthouse steps, and E. [the defendant] had me. . . . I sent my kids to their grandparents out of town . . . to hide them. . . . I'm paranoid. I can't shake it. I went to the Smoky Mountains and twice I ran into a fellow who looked like him. I flipped out. I got hysterical, shook, and ran. . . . I dreamed he broke into my apartment on several occasions. Same dream over and over of E. standing there with that smirking look on his face.

What seems clear from our study is that jury duty can affect jurors' health. Jurors often miss work, are separated from their families for lengthy periods, and are sometimes subjected to large amounts of stress within the courtroom, all in order to fulfill a responsibility to the community. But does the community, in turn, have a responsibility to jurors? At the

very least, at the conclusion of a trial, jurors should be assessed to determine whether they are in need of medical or psychological care.

[Advice]

## WAR AND PEACE AND QUIET

From *A Calendar of Wisdom*, a daybook of advice compiled and written by Leo Tolstoy, to be published next month for the first time in English by Scribner. For each day of the year, Tolstoy chose a theme and offered a "wise thought," along with quotes from "the greatest philosophers of all times." Translated from the Russian by Peter Sekirin.

FEBRUARY 26: After a long conversation, stop and try to remember what you have just dis-



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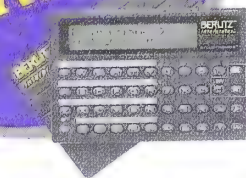
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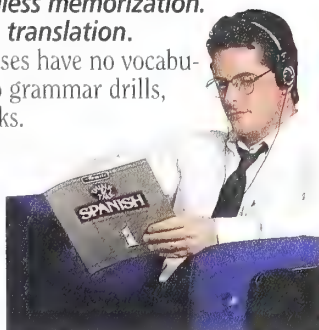
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planetoid fifteen, twenty, thirty light-years from Earth and—by dint of its optical wizardry—watch our youth unfold, we must make do with our memories, our diaries and notebooks, our videotapes, microcassettes, floppy disks, our photo albums, our evocative souvenirs and bric-a-brac—all the various and sundry madeleines we use to goad our hippocampi into reverse-scan.

With only the crude armamentarium of the memoirist at our disposal, it is impossible to portray the past with anything approaching clinical accuracy. Cognitive neuroscientists frequently use the image of hooded convict-drones pumping pink fiberglass insulation into the attic of a sumptuous mansion whose mistress sprawls below caressing the soft down of her belly with a riding crop to describe the way we fill the lacunae in our memories with a meringue of utter fabrication. And we invariably litter the *mise-en-scène* of our past with the cultural props of our present—Mommy staggers to the table at a Pee Wee Football

Awards dinner anachronistically accoutred in an Azzedine Alaïa mummy dress, Great-grandpa, five days out of a shtetl in Poland, washes down Pringles with a 40-ounce bottle of St.

Ides malt liquor as he waits in line for an eye exam at Ellis Island.

**A**s you read my work, some of you may experience an eerie shock of recognition. You may bolt upright in bed, murmuring to yourself, “I think I actually *know* this guy.” Some of you may even say, “Hey, I think I *dated* this guy.” On the other hand, you may feel as if you’re reading your *own* diary. If you feel dirty and ashamed and yet flushed with arousal as if you’ve been caught in an act of auto-voyeurism, peeping through the bedroom window of your own *doppelgänger*, because each page is like a mirror and you’ve never seen yourself so closely and the pores of your nose have never seemed so gaping, like rabbit holes, and suddenly there’s that terror of actually falling down one of them, that terror of interminable free fall . . . Well, okay, that’s cool, that was my intention. In a sense, I’ve tried to write *your* autobiography.

Because what I really want is for you to actually inhabit my body, to get into my musculature and fascia, my limbs and trunk and head, to envelop your brain with my brain. I want you to know what it feels like to walk through a Foodtown encumbered by the twitching heft of my 140 pounds and then to try to read a USDA nutrition label on a can of kipper snacks as your mind thrashes against the vortical undertow of my ghastly memories.

I want you to experience what it’s like to be four years old and summoned to the school neurologist’s office and told that because of hypertrophic dendrite growth in your brain, your head can no longer be supported by your neck—to be told that it’s like trying to support a bowling ball on a single strand of uncooked angel hair pasta—and to have to wear a specially built cervical flying buttress—a doughnut-shaped base worn around the waist, from which four thick metal flanges rise up to pinion the front, sides, and back of the head. I want you to experience the instantaneousness with which the uproarious din of a Chuck E. Cheese is stilled when you walk in sporting that device. And I want you to feel what it’s like to be suddenly remanded into the custody of a so-called aunt—a bushy-haired, pockmarked woman with a lush mustache and tall karakul hat who fills your head with paranoid conspiracies and crackpot theories, including the notion that Jack Ruby didn’t intentionally kill Lee Harvey Oswald, that his death was accidental and occurred as the two had rough sex.

In order to wear this garment of a body, you’ll need to take the bones out. Bones func-

[Assessment]

## MR. MODESTY

*From an interview with actor Michael Keaton in the August issue of MovieLine magazine. The interview was conducted by Larry Grobel, a contributing editor of the magazine.*

LARRY GROBEL: You’ve said before that you’re not doing the roles on film that you really want to do.

MICHAEL KEATON: The business is driven by money, now more than ever. Therefore the opportunities to do the things you really want to do start to diminish. It’s frustrating at times, because I can do so much. It’s just a fact. I just can. I actually achieve greatness from time to time.

GROBEL: In which moments do you think you’ve achieved greatness on film?

KEATON: There’s times in *Clean and Sober* when I’m great. There’s times in *Beetlejuice* where I’m really great. There’s times in *Batman* where I’m great. There’s times in *Much Ado* when I’m great. There’s times in *Pacific Heights* when I’m pretty great. There’s times in *Night Shift* and *Mr. Mom* when I’m great. There’s times in this new movie, *Desperate Measures*, when I’m great.





"Noodle Girl" and "Noodle Boy," life-size sculptures by Tokyo artist Majima Ryoichi. His work was on display last fall at the Ikeda Museum of 20th Century Art in Shizuoka, Japan.

tion essentially as hangers and shoe trees. So fillet first, then get in.

Once you're in, I'm out.

My soul is released.

But don't worry. It's cool. This was my intention.

You see, the soul can outrace light. (They've clocked souls leaving bodies at somewhere around 190,000 miles per second.) So while you're trudging around in my body, my soul will be on that distant planetoid, sitting on a couch in front of the telescope's monitor, drinking a beer, eating a mortadella, prosciutto, and provolone hero—watching the reruns of my life. Laughing, crying, belching.

[Visions]

## THE VIEW FROM INTENSIVE CARE

*From a work in progress by Saul Bellow in the inaugural issue, published this spring, of News from the Republic of Letters, a journal co-edited by Bellow and Keith Botsford. Bellow received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976; he is the author, most recently, of The Actual, a novella.*

I had visited friends and relatives in the intensive-care units of various hospitals and with

the natural stupidity of a sound, healthy man had sometimes considered that I might one day be the person strapped down, plugged into the life-supporting machines.

Now my lungs had failed. I was the dying man. A machine did my breathing for me. Unconscious, I had no more idea of death than the dead have. But my head (I assume that it was the head) was full of visions, delusions, hallucinations. These were not dreams or nightmares. Nightmares have an escape hatch. I was on a drug called Versed, which is said to deaden the memory. But my memory has always been tenacious. I can remember being turned often and someone pounding my back and ordering me to breathe.

But mostly I recall that I thought I was wandering about, having a heavy time of it. In one of my visions I am on a city street looking for the place where I am supposed to pass the night. At last I find it. I enter what was long ago, in the Twenties, a movie palace. The ticket booth is boarded up. But just behind it, on a tile floor that slopes upward, are folding army cots. There is no film being shown. The hundreds of seats are empty. But I understand that the air in here is specially treated and that it will be good for your lungs to breathe it in. You get medical points toward your recovery for spending the night here. So I join half a dozen others and lie down. Nobody here is sleepy. Nor are the men talkative. They get up. They mooch about the lobby or sit on the edge of a cot. The floor hasn't been mopped in fifty years or more. You sleep





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fully dressed and lie in your overcoat wearing your shoes. Hats or caps are not removed.

In the middle of one night in the intensive-care unit, I climbed out of bed thinking that I was in Vermont and that one of my granddaughters was skiing around the house. I was annoyed with her parents for not having brought her in to see her grandfather. It was a winter morning, or so I thought. The sun seemed to be shining on the snow. I climbed over the bedrail without noticing that I was attached by tubes and needles to hanging flasks containing all kinds of intravenous mixtures. I saw, as if they were someone else's, my bare feet on the sunny floor. They seemed unwilling to bear my weight, but I forced them to obey my will. Then I fell, landing on my back. At first I felt no pain. I was vexed by the cancellation of my faculties. As I lay helpless, an orderly ran up and said, "I heard you were a troublemaker." Later, one of the doctors said that my back was so inflamed that it looked like a forest fire seen from the air.

**O**ne more brief vision. Vela figures in this one. Vela had been my wife for one decade—I

[Petition]

## BRINGING LOVE BACK TO TOWN

*From a petition presented in May by the selectmen of Newbury, New Hampshire, to the state Department of Transportation. The previous month, state workers had painted over a twenty-year-old graffito written on a local rock; on April 29, the message reappeared.*

**W**HEREAS, unknown parties have recently restored "Chicken Farmer I Still Love You" to the southern ledges adjacent to the highway on Route 103; and

WHEREAS, the impact of that message has been entirely positive during its lifetime; and

WHEREAS, the obliteration of that message has caused great consternation in the Town;

WE, the selectmen of the Town of Newbury, do hereby respectfully request the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation to let this message of faith, love, and endurance stand.

married her at sixty-five and she took off on my seventy-fifth birthday. She is perhaps the most beautiful of all my wives, if you go by photographic standards or by feminine measurements or statistics.

She and I find ourselves, in this curious scenario, confronting the polished stone wall of a bank interior—an investment bank. I had come to the meeting at her request. She was escorted by a Spanish-looking and very elegant man in his mid-to-late twenties. A third man was present as well, a banker in a frock coat who spoke French. Before us, set into the glamorous marble wall, were two coins: one a U.S. dime, the other a silver dollar with a diameter of ten or twelve feet.

"Can you tell me where we are?" I said. "And why we are meeting here in front of these coins? They signify—what?"

Then the banker came forward and said that over a period of years the dime would turn into the dollar with the ten-foot diameter.

"How long a period?"

"A century or a little more."

"Well, I don't doubt the arithmetic is right—but for whom would this be done?"

"For yourself," said Vela.

"Me? And how do you figure it?"

"Through cryonics," she said. "A person lets himself be frozen and stored. A century later they thaw him back to life. This is called cryonics."

"Let's hear what you want me to do, Vela. Guesswork is no use. What have you got in mind—when would you like to have me frozen?"

"You'd do it now. I'd go later. Then we'd wake up together in the twenty-second century."

The gray glow and the high polish of the marble slabs were calculated to persuade the deepest skeptic of eternal dollar stability. But it was also the facade of a cold-storage plant—or crypt. This elegant place was not your resting place. Your body would be stacked with the bodies of other investors elsewhere. You would lie in a lab far from the marble facade. Technician-priests would tend you generation after generation, regulating the temperature and moisture, and keeping tabs on your condition.

The bank man, actually wearing a cutaway coat, said in a practiced voice, "By then the life span will be upward of 200 years."

"It's the only chance for our marriage," Vela told me.

I must tell you that I believed I had already died and risen again, and there was a curious distance in my mind between the old way of seeing (false) and the new way (strange but liberating).

"I can't do this," I told Vela.





From "Need for a Miracle," a series of photographs documenting religious fanaticism in Italy, by Massimo Siragusa. This photograph appeared in *World Press Photo: Yearbook 1997*. Siragusa lives in Rome.

"Why can't you do this?"

"You're asking me to commit suicide. Suicide is forbidden."

"By whom is suicide forbidden?"

"It's against my religion. Jews don't commit suicide unless they lose the siege, as they did at Masada, or are about to be hacked to pieces, as in the Crusades. Then the martyrs put their children to death before they kill themselves."

"You never fall back on religion except to win an argument," said Vela. "You owe me this."

It is a principle with me not to argue with irrational people. I simply shook my head and repeated, "It can't be done. It can't be, and I won't do it."

I may not have been aware, when I believed myself to be in a bank, with a small dime and a huge dollar set side by side in polished marble, that in the real world my life was being saved. Doctors, nurses, technicians were all working to assist me. When or if I was saved, I would go on with my life.

"That meeting in the bank you believe in,"

my wife, Trudi, the real wife, said, after I had described this moment to her. "Why should it always be the *worst* things that appear to you to be so real? I'll never be able to talk you out of being sadistic to yourself."

"Yes," I agreed. "It has a specific kind of satisfaction; the bad of it guarantees it as real experience. This is what we go through, and it's what existence is like. The brain is a mirror that reflects the world. Of course, the pictures we see are not the real things. But they are dear to us; we come to love them even though we are aware how distorting an organ the mirror-brain is. But this is not the moment to turn metaphysical."

Of course I was also being misleading. On this subject—reality—I couldn't be entirely straight even with Trudi, my incomparable wife. I know only that the oddity of my hallucinatory surroundings was in a way liberating. And I wonder sometimes whether at the threshold of death I may not have been entertaining myself lightheartedly, positively enjoying these preposterous delusions—fictions that did not have to be invented. ■





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# ON THE USES OF A LIBERAL EDUCATION

## I. AS LITE ENTERTAINMENT FOR BORED COLLEGE STUDENTS

*By Mark Edmundson at the University of Virginia*

Today is evaluation day in my Freud class, and everything has changed. The class meets twice a week, late in the afternoon, and the clientele, about fifty undergraduates, tends to drag in and slump, looking disconsolate and a little lost, waiting for a jump start. To get the discussion moving, they usually require a joke, an anecdote, an off-the-wall question—When you were a kid, were your Halloween getups ego costumes, id costumes, or superego costumes? That sort of thing. But today, as soon as I flourish the forms, a buzz rises in the room. Today they write their assessments of the course, their assessments of *me*, and they are without a doubt wide-awake. “What is your evaluation of the instructor?” asks question number eight, entreating them to circle a number between five (excellent) and one (poor, poor). Whatever interpretive subtlety they’ve acquired during the term is now out the window. Edmundson: one to five, stand and shoot.

And they do. As I retreat through the door—I never stay around for this phase of the ritual—I look over my shoulder and see them toiling away like the devil’s auditors. They’re pitched into high writing gear, even the ones who struggle to squeeze out their journal entries word by word, stoked on a procedure they have by now supremely mastered. They’re playing the informed consumer, letting the

provider know where he’s come through and where he’s not quite up to snuff.

But why am I so distressed, bolting like a refugee out of my own classroom, where I usually hold easy sway? Chances are the evaluations will be much like what they’ve been in the past—they’ll be just fine. It’s likely that I’ll be commended for being “interesting” (and I am commended, many times over), that I’ll be cited for my relaxed and tolerant ways (that happens, too), that my sense of humor and capacity to connect the arcana of the subject matter with current culture will come in for some praise (yup). I’ve been hassled this term, finishing a manuscript, and so haven’t given their journals the attention I should have, and for that I’m called—quite civilly, though—to account. Overall, I get off pretty well.

Yet I have to admit that I do not much like the image of myself that emerges from these forms, the image of knowledgeable, humorous detachment and bland tolerance. I do not like the forms themselves, with their number ratings, reminiscent of the sheets circulated after the TV pilot has just played to its sample audience in Burbank. Most of all I dislike the attitude of calm consumer expertise that pervades the responses. I’m disturbed by the serene belief that my function—and, more important, Freud’s, or Shakespeare’s, or Blake’s—is to di-

*Mark Edmundson is a contributing editor of Harper’s Magazine. He is the author of Nightmare on Main Street, a study of the gothic in contemporary culture, forthcoming in October from Harvard University Press.*



UNIVERSITY CULTURE, LIKE AMERICAN CULTURE WRIT LARGE,  
IS EVER MORE DEVOTED TO CONSUMPTION AND ENTERTAINMENT,  
TO THE USING AND USING UP OF GOODS AND IMAGES

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vert, entertain, and interest. Observes one respondent, not at all unrepresentative: "Edmundson has done a fantastic job of presenting this difficult, important & controversial material in an enjoyable and approachable way."

Thanks but no thanks. I don't teach to amuse, to divert, or even, for that matter, to be merely interesting. When someone says she "enjoyed" the course—and that word crops up again and again in my evaluations—somewhere at the edge of my immediate complacency I feel encroaching self-dislike. That is not at all what I had in mind. The off-the-wall questions and the sidebar jokes are meant as lead-ins to stronger stuff—in the case of the Freud course, to a complexly tragic view of life. But the affability and the one-liners often seem to be all that land with the students; their journals and evaluations leave me little doubt.

I want some of them to say that they've been changed by the course. I want them to measure themselves against what they've read. It's said that some time ago a Columbia University instructor used to issue a harsh two-part question. One: What book did you most dislike in the course? Two: What intellectual or characterological flaws in you does that dislike point to? The hand that framed that question was surely heavy. But at least it compels one to see intellectual work as a confrontation between two people, student and author, where the stakes matter. Those Columbia students were being asked to relate the quality of an *encounter*, not rate the action as though it had unfolded on the big screen.

Why are my students describing the Oedipus complex and the death drive as being interesting and enjoyable to contemplate? And why am I coming across as an urbane, mildly ironic, endlessly affable guide to this intellectual territory, operating without intensity, generous, funny, and loose?

Because that's what works. On evaluation day, I reap the rewards of my partial compliance with the culture of my students and, too, with the culture of the university as it now operates. It's a culture that's gotten little exploration. Current critics tend to think that liberal-arts education is in crisis because universities have been invaded by professors with peculiar ideas: deconstruction, Lacanianism, feminism, queer theory. They believe that genius and tra-

dition are out and that P.C., multiculturalism, and identity politics are in because of an invasion by tribes of tenured radicals, the late millennial equivalents of the Visigoth hordes that cracked Rome's walls.

But mulling over my evaluations and then trying to take a hard, extended look at campus life both here at the University of Virginia and around the country eventually led me to some different conclusions. To me, liberal-arts education is as ineffective as it is now not chiefly because there are a lot of strange theories in the air. (Used well, those theories *can* be illuminating.) Rather, it's that university culture, like American culture writ large, is, to put it crudely, ever more devoted to consumption and entertainment, to the using and using up of goods and images. For someone growing up in America now, there are few available alternatives to the cool consumer worldview. My students didn't ask for that view, much less create it, but they bring a consumer *weltanschauung* to school, where it exerts a powerful, and largely unacknowledged, influence. If we want to understand current universities, with their multiple woes, we might try leaving the realms of expert debate and fine ideas and turning to the classrooms and campuses, where a

new kind of weather is gathering.

**F**rom time to time I bump into a colleague in the corridor and we have what I've come to think of as a Joon Lee fest. Joon Lee is one of the best students I've taught. He's endlessly curious, has read a small library's worth, seen every movie, and knows all about showbiz and entertainment. For a class of mine he wrote an essay using Nietzsche's Apollo and Dionysus to analyze the pop group The Supremes. A trite, cultural-studies bonbon? Not at all. He said striking things about conceptions of race in America and about how they shape our ideas of beauty. When I talk with one of his other teachers, we run on about the general splendors of his work and presence. But what inevitably follows a JL fest is a mournful reprise about the divide that separates him and a few other remarkable students from their contemporaries. It's not that some aren't nearly as bright—in terms of intellectual ability, my students are all that I could ask for. Instead, it's that Joon Lee has decided to follow his inter-



ests and let them make him into a singular and rather eccentric man; in his charming way, he doesn't mind being at odds with most anyone.

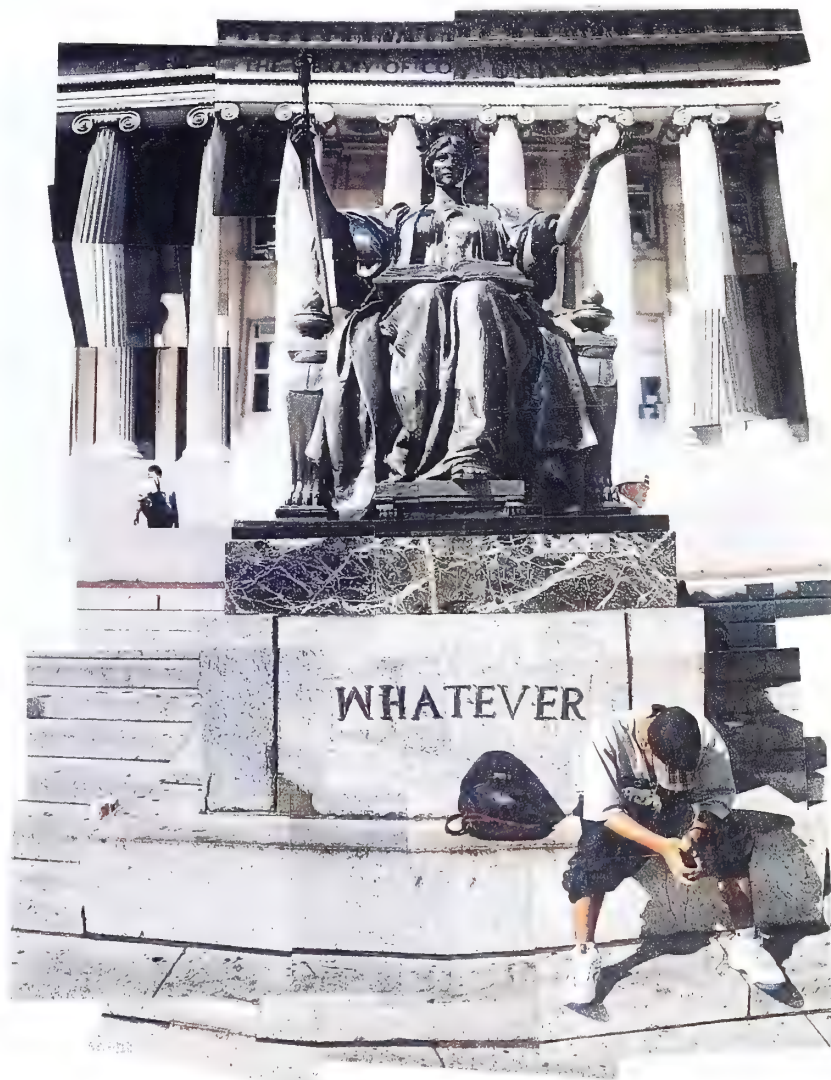
It's his capacity for enthusiasm that sets Joon apart from what I've come to think of as the reigning generational style. Whether the students are sorority/fraternity types, grunge aficionados, piercer/tattooers, black or white, rich or middle class (alas, I teach almost no students from truly poor backgrounds), they are, nearly across the board, very, very self-contained. On good days they display a light, appealing glow; on bad days, shuffling disgruntlement. But there's little fire, little passion to be found.

This point came home to me a few weeks ago when I was wandering across the university grounds. There, beneath a classically cast portico, were two students, male and female, having a rip-roaring argument. They were incensed, bellowing at each other, headstrong, confident, and wild. It struck me how rarely I see this kind of full-out feeling in students anymore. Strong emotional display is forbidden. When conflicts arise, it's generally understood that one of the parties will say something sarcastically propitiating ("whatever" often does it) and slouch away.

How did my students reach this peculiar state in which all passion seems to be spent? I think that many of them have imbibed their sense of self from consumer culture in general and from the tube in particular. They're the progeny of 100 cable channels and omnipresent Blockbuster outlets. TV, Marshall McLuhan famously said, is a cool medium. Those who play best on it are low-key and nonassertive; they blend in. Enthusiasm, à la Joon Lee, quickly looks absurd. The form of character that's most appealing on TV is calmly self-interested though never greedy, attuned to the conventions, and ironic. Judicious timing is preferred to sudden self-assertion. The TV medium is inhospitable to inspiration, improvi-

sation, failures, slipups. All must run perfectly.

Naturally, a cool youth culture is a marketing bonanza for producers of the right products, who do all they can to enlarge that culture and keep it grinding. The Internet, TV, and magazines now teem with what I call persona ads, ads for Nikes and Reeboks and Jeeps and Blazers that don't so much endorse the capacities of the



product per se as show you what sort of person you will be once you've acquired it. The Jeep ad that features hip, outdoorsy kids whipping a Frisbee from mountaintop to mountaintop isn't so much about what Jeeps can do as it is about the kind of people who own them. Buy a Jeep and be one with them. The ad is of little consequence in itself, but expand its message exponentially and you have the central thrust of current consumer culture—buy in order to be.



Most of the students seem to operate on the motto to look right, not to make a statement for themselves. (Do I have to tell you that those two students having the argument under the portico turned out to be acting in a role-playing game?) The specter of the uncool creates a subtle tyranny. It's apparently an easy standard to subscribe to, this Letterman-like, Tarantino-like cool, but once committed to it, you discover that matters are rather different. You're in-

new product, a new show, a new style, a new generation—it must be good. So maybe, even at the risk of winning the withered, brown laurels of crankdom, it pays to resist newness-worship and cast a colder eye.

Praise for my students? I have some of that too. What my students are, at their best, is decent. They are potent believers in equality. They help out at the soup kitchen and volunteer to tutor poor kids to get a stripe on their ré-

sumés, sure. But they also want other people to have a fair shot. And in their commitment to fairness they are discerning; there you see them at their intellectual best. If I were on trial and innocent, I'd want them on the jury.

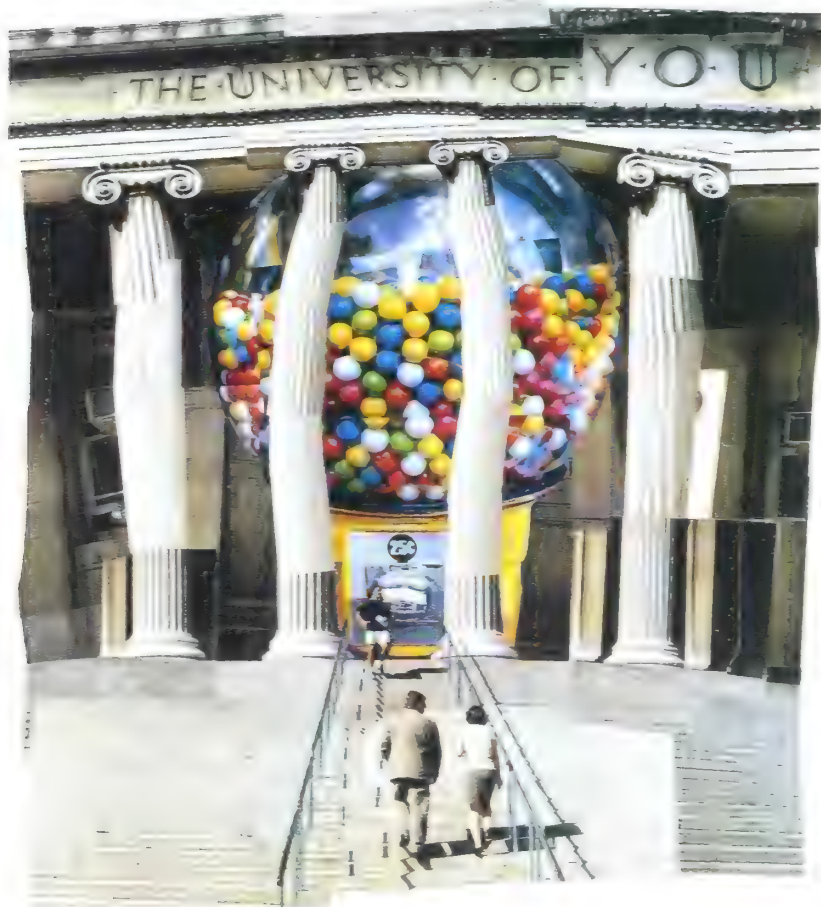
What they will not generally do, though, is indict the current system. They won't talk about how the exigencies of capitalism lead to a reserve army of the unemployed and nearly inevitable misery. That would be getting too loud, too brash. For the pervading view is the cool consumer perspective, where passion and strong admiration are forbidden. "To stand in awe of nothing, Numicus, is perhaps the one and only thing that can make a man happy and keep him so," says Horace in the *Epistles*, and I fear that his lines ought to hang as a motto over the entrance to high consumer capitalism.

It's easy to mount one's high horse and blame the students for this state of

affairs. But they didn't create the present cul-

ture. It was the generation that of the Sixties, that let the counterculture search for pleasure devolve into a quest for commodities. And they weren't the ones responsible when they were six and seven and eight years old, for unplugging the TV set from time to time or for hauling off and kicking a hole through it. It's my generation of parents who sheltered these students, kept them away from the hard knocks of everyday life, making them coddled and overprivileged, who demanded

that the kids be perfect, so that the kids are shocked



hibited, except on ordained occasions, from showing emotion, stifled from trying to achieve anything original. You're made to feel that even the slightest departure from the reigning culture is a failure. The culture is tensely committed to a laid-back norm.

Am I coming off like something of a crank here? Maybe. Oscar Wilde, who is almost never wrong, suggested that it is perilous to promiscuously contradict people who are much younger than yourself. Point taken. But one of the lessons that consumer hype tries to insinuate is that we must never rebel against the new, never even question it. If it's new—a new need, a



STUDENTS WILL NOT INDICT THE EXIGENCIES OF CAPITALISM.  
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if their college profs don't reflexively suck up to them.

Of course, the current generational style isn't simply derived from culture and environment. It's also about dollars. Students worry that taking too many chances with their educations will sabotage their future prospects. They're aware of the fact that a drop that looks more and more like one wall of the Grand Canyon separates the top economic tenth from the rest of the population. There's a sentiment currently abroad that if you step aside for a moment, to write, to travel, to fall too hard in love, you might lose position permanently. We may be on a conveyor belt, but it's worse down there on the filth-strewn floor. So don't sound off, don't blow your chance.

But wait. I teach at the famously conservative University of Virginia. Can I extend my view from Charlottesville to encompass the whole country, a whole generation of college students? I can only say that I hear comparable stories about classroom life from colleagues everywhere in America. When I visit other schools to lecture, I see a similar scene unfolding. There are, of course, terrific students everywhere. And they're all the better for the way they've had to strive against the existing conformity. At some of the small liberal-arts colleges, the tradition of strong engagement persists. But overall, the students strike me as being sweet and sad, hovering in a nearly suspended animation.

Too often now the pedagogical challenge is to make a lot from a little. Teaching Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," you ask for comments. No one responds. So you call on Stephen. Stephen: "The sound, this poem really flows." You: "Stephen seems interested in the music of the poem. We might extend his comment to ask if the poem's music coheres with its argument. Are they consistent? Or is there an emotional pain submerged here that's contrary to the poem's appealing melody?" All right, it's not usually that bad. But close. One friend describes it as rebound teaching: they proffer a weightless comment, you hit it back for all you're worth, then it comes dribbling out again. Occasionally a professor will try to explain away this intellectual timidity by describing the students as perpetrators of postmodern irony, a highly sophisticated mode. Everything's a slick counterfeit, a simulacrum, so by

no means should any phenomenon be taken seriously. But the students don't have the urbane, Oscar Wilde-type demeanor that should go with this view. Oscar was cheerful, funny, confident, strange. (Wilde, mortally ill, living in a Paris flophouse: "My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. One or the other of us has to go.") This generation's style is considerate, easy to please, and a touch depressed.

Granted, you might say, the kids come to school immersed in a consumer mentality—they're good Americans, after all—but then the university and the professors do everything in their power to fight that dreary mind-set in the interest of higher ideals, right? So it should be. But let us look at what is actually coming to pass.

Over the past few years, the physical layout of my university has been changing. To put it a little indecorously, the place is looking more and more like a retirement spread for the young. Our funds go to construction, into new dorms, into renovating the student union. We have a new aquatics center and ever-improving gyms, stocked with StairMasters and Nautilus machines. Engraved on the wall in the gleaming aquatics building is a line by our founder, Thomas Jefferson, declaring that everyone ought to get about two hours' exercise a day. Clearly even the author of the Declaration of Independence endorses the turning of his university into a sports-and-fitness emporium.

But such improvements shouldn't be surprising. Universities need to attract the best (that is, the smartest *and* the richest) students in order to survive in an ever more competitive market. Schools want kids whose parents can pay the full freight, not the ones who need scholarships or want to bargain down the tuition costs. If the marketing surveys say that the kids require sports centers, then, trustees willing, they shall have them. In fact, as I began looking around, I came to see that more and more of what's going on in the university is customer driven. The consumer pressures that beset me on evaluation day are only a part of an overall trend.

From the start, the contemporary university's relationship with students has a solicitous, nearly servile tone. As soon as someone enters his junior year in high school, and especially if



# THE SOCRATIC METHOD SEEMS TOO JAGGED FOR CURRENT SENSIBILITIES. STUDENTS ARE INTIMIDATED IN CLASS; THE THOUGHT OF BEING EMBARRASSED IN FRONT OF THE GROUP FILLS THEM WITH DREAD

he's living in a prosperous zip code, the informational material—the advertising—comes flooding in. Pictures, testimonials, videocassettes, and CD ROMs (some hidden, some not) arrive at the door from colleges across the country, all trying to capture the student and his tuition cash. The freshman-to-be sees photos of well-appointed dorm rooms; of elaborate phys-ed facilities; of fine dining rooms; of expertly kept sports fields; of orchestras and drama troupes; of students working alone (no overhearing grown-ups in range), peering with high seriousness into computers and microscopes; or of students arrayed outdoors in attractive conversational garlands.

Occasionally—but only occasionally, for we usually photograph rather badly; in appearance we tend at best to be styleless—there's a professor teaching a class. (The college catalogues I received, by my request only, in the late Sixties were austere affairs full of professors' credentials and course descriptions; it was clear on whose terms the enterprise was going to unfold.) A college financial officer recently put matters to me in concise, if slightly melodramatic, terms: "Colleges don't have admissions offices anymore, they have marketing departments." Is it surprising that someone who has been approached with photos and tapes, bells and whistles, might come in thinking that the Freud and Shakespeare she had signed up to study were also going to be agreeable treats?

How did we reach this point? In part the answer is a matter of demographics and (surprise) of money. Aided by the G.I. bill, the college-going population in America dramatically increased after the Second World War. Then came the baby boomers, and to accommodate them, schools continued to grow. Universities expand easily enough, but with tenure locking faculty in for lifetime jobs, and with the general reluctance of administrators to eliminate their own slots, it's not easy for a university to contract. So after the baby boomers had passed through—like a fat meal digested by a boa constrictor—the colleges turned to energetic promotional strategies to fill the empty chairs. And suddenly college became a buyer's market. What students and their parents wanted had to be taken more and more into account. That usually meant creating more comfortable, less challenging environments, places where almost

no one failed, everything was enjoyable, and everyone was nice.

Just as universities must compete with one another for students, so must the individual departments. At a time of rank economic anxiety, the English and history majors have to contend for students against the more success-insuring branches, such as the sciences and the commerce school. In 1968, more than 21 percent of all the bachelor's degrees conferred in America were in the humanities; by 1993, that number had fallen to about 13 percent. The humanities now must struggle to attract students, many of whose parents devoutly wish they would study something else.

One of the ways we've tried to stay attractive is by loosening up. We grade much more softly than our colleagues in science. In English, we don't give many Ds, or Cs for that matter. (The rigors of Chem 101 create almost as many English majors per year as do the splendors of Shakespeare.) A professor at Stanford recently explained grade inflation in the humanities by observing that the undergraduates were getting smarter every year; the higher grades simply recorded how much better they were than their predecessors. Sure.

Along with softening the grades, many humanities departments have relaxed major requirements. There are some good reasons for introducing more choice into curricula and requiring fewer standard courses. But the move, like many others in the university now, jibes with a tendency to serve—and not challenge—the students. Students can also float in and out of classes during the first two weeks of each term without making any commitment. The common name for this time span—shopping period—speaks volumes about the consumer mentality that's now in play. Usually, too, the kids can drop courses up until the last month with only an innocuous "W" on their transcripts. Does a course look too challenging? No problem. Take it pass-fail. A happy consumer is, by definition, one with multiple options, one who can always have what he wants. And since a course is something the students and their parents have bought and paid for, why can't they do with it pretty much as they please?

A sure result of the university's widening elective leeway is to give students more power



over their teachers. Those who don't like you can simply avoid you. If the clientele dislikes you en masse, you can be left without students, period. My first term teaching I walked into my introduction to poetry course and found it inhabited by one student, the gloriously named Bambi Lynn Dean. Bambi and I chatted amiably awhile, but for all that she and the pleasure of her name could offer, I was fast on the way to meltdown. It was all a mistake, luckily, a problem with the scheduling book. Everyone was waiting for me next door. But in a dozen years of teaching I haven't forgotten that feeling of being ignominiously marooned. For it happens to others, and not always because of scheduling glitches. I've seen older colleagues go through hot embarrassment at not having enough students sign up for their courses: they graded too hard, demanded too much, had beliefs too far out of keeping with the existing disposition. It takes only a few such instances to draw other members of the professoriat further into line.

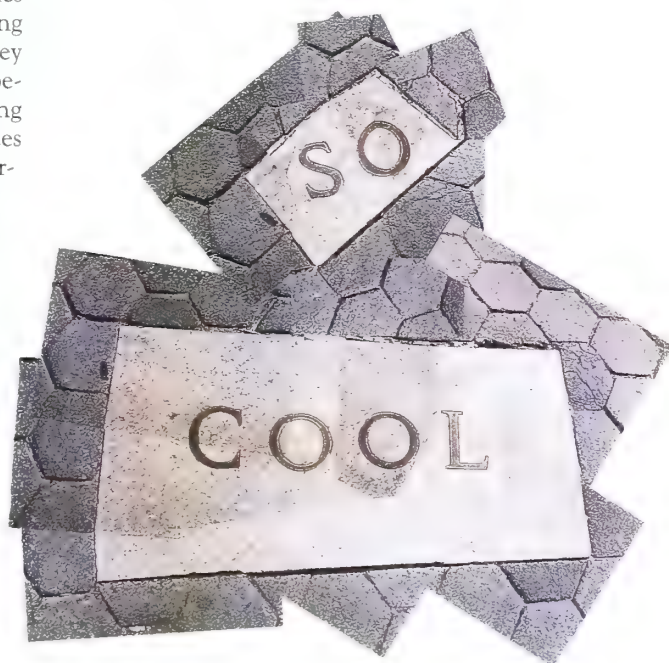
And if what's called tenure reform—which generally just means the abolition of tenure—is broadly enacted, professors will be yet more vulnerable to the whims of their customer-students. Teach what pulls the kids in, or walk. What about entire departments that don't deliver? If the kids say no to Latin and Greek, is it time to dissolve classics? Such questions are being entertained more and more seriously by university administrators.

How does one prosper with the present clientele? Many of the most successful professors now are the ones who have “decentered” their classrooms. There's a new emphasis on group projects and on computer-generated exchanges among the students. What they seem to want most is to talk to one another. A classroom now is frequently an “environment,” a place highly conducive to the exchange of existing ideas, the students' ideas. Listening to one another, students sometimes change their opinions. But what they generally can't do is acquire a new vocabulary, a new perspective, that will cast issues in a fresh light.

The Socratic method—the animated, sometimes impolite give-and-take between student and teacher—seems too jagged for current sensibilities. Students frequently come to my office to tell me how intimidated they feel in class; the thought of being embarrassed in front of the group fills them with dread. I remember a student telling me how humiliating it was to be corrected by the teacher, by me. So I asked the logical question: “Should I let a major factual error

go by so as to save discomfort?” The student—a good student, smart and earnest—said that was a tough question. He'd need to think about it.

Disturbing? Sure. But I wonder, are we really getting students ready for Socratic exchange with professors when we push them off into vast lecture rooms, two and three hundred to a class, sometimes face them with only grad students until their third year, and signal in our myriad professorial ways that we often have much better things to do than sit in our offices and talk with them? How bad will the student-faculty ratios have to become, how teeming the lecture courses, before we hear students right-



eously complaining, as they did thirty years ago, about the impersonality of their schools, about their decline into knowledge factories? “This is a firm,” said Mario Savio at Berkeley during the Free Speech protests of the Sixties, “and if the Board of Regents are the board of directors, . . . then . . . the faculty are a bunch of employees and we're the raw material. But we're a bunch of raw material that don't mean . . . to be made into any product.”

Teachers who really do confront students, who provide significant challenges to what they believe, can be very successful, granted. But sometimes such professors generate more than a little trouble for themselves. A controversial teacher can send students hurrying to the deans and the counselors, claiming to have been offended. (“Offensive” is the preferred term of repugnance today, just as “enjoyable” is the summit of praise.) Colleges have



brought in hordes of counselors and deans to make sure that everything is smooth, serene, unflustered, that everyone has a good time. To the counselor, to the dean, and to the university legal squad, that which is normal, healthy, and prudent is best.

An air of caution and deference is everywhere. When my students come to talk with me in my office, they often exhibit a Francis-

sleep.) They are almost unfailingly polite. They don't want to offend me; I could hurt them, savage their grades.

Naturally, there are exceptions, kids I chat animatedly with, who offer a joke, or go on about this or that new CD (almost never a book, no). But most of the traffic is genially sleepwalking. I have to admit that I'm a touch wary, too. I tend to hold back. An un-

guarded remark, a joke that's taken to be off-color, or simply an uncomprehended comment can lead to difficulties. I keep it literal. They scare me a little, these kind and melancholy students, who themselves seem rather frightened of their own lives.

Before they arrive, we ply the students with luscious ads, guaranteeing them a cross between summer camp and *lotusland*. When they get here, flattery and nonstop entertainment are available, if that's what they want. And when they leave? How do we send our students out into the world? More and more, our administrators call the booking agents and line up one or another celebrity to usher the graduates into the millennium. This past spring, Kermit the Frog won himself an honorary degree at Southampton College on Long Island; Bruce Willis and Yogi Berra took credentials away at Montclair

State; Arnold Schwarzenegger scored at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. At Wellesley, Oprah Winfrey gave the commencement address. (Wellesley—one of the most rigorous academic colleges in the nation.) At the University of Vermont, Whoopi Goldberg laid down the word. But why should a worthy administrator contract the likes of Susan Sontag, Christopher Hitchens, or Robert Hughes—someone who might actually say something, something disturbing, something “offensive”—when he can get what the parents and kids apparently want and what the newspapers will softly commend—more lite entertainment, more TV?

Is it a surprise, then, that this generation of students—steeped in consumer culture before going off to school, treated as potent customers



can humility. “Do you have a moment?” “I know you’re busy. I won’t take up much of your time.” Their presences tend to be very light; they almost never change the temperature of the room. The dress is nondescript: clothes are in earth tones; shoes are practical—cross-trainers, hiking boots, work shoes, Dr. Martens, with now and then a stylish pair of raised-sole boots on one of the young women. Many, male and female both, peep from beneath the bills of monogrammed baseball caps. Quite a few wear sports, or even corporate, logos, sometimes on one piece of clothing but occasionally (and disconcertingly) on more. The walk is slow; speech is careful, sweet, a bit weary, and without strong inflection. (After the first lively week of the term, most seem far in debt to



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by the university well before their date of arrival, then pandered to from day one until the morning of the final kiss-off from Kermit or one of his kin—are inclined to see the books they read as a string of entertainments to be placidly enjoyed or languidly cast down? Given the way universities are now administered (which is more and more to say, given the way that they are currently marketed), is it a shock that the kids don't come to school hot to learn, unable to bear their own ignorance? For some measure of self-dislike, or self-discontent—which is much different than simple depression—seems to me to be a prerequisite for getting an education that matters. My students, alas, usually lack the confidence to acknowledge what would be their most precious asset for learning: their ignorance.

Not long ago, I asked my Freud class a question that, however hoary, never fails to solicit intriguing responses: Who are your heroes? Whom do you admire? After one remarkable answer, featuring T. S. Eliot as hero, a series of generic replies rolled in, one gray wave after the next: my father, my best friend, a doctor who lives in our town, my high school history teacher. Virtually all the heroes were people my students had known personally, people who had done something local, specific, and practical, and had done it for them. They were good people, unselfish people, these heroes, but most of all they were people who had delivered the goods.

My students' answers didn't exhibit any philosophical resistance to the idea of greatness. It's not that they had been primed by their professors with complex arguments to combat genius. For the truth is that these students don't need debunking theories. Long before college, skepticism became their habitual mode. They are the progeny of Bart Simpson and David Letterman, and the hyper-cool ethos of the box. It's inane to say that theorizing professors have created them, as many conservative critics like to do. Rather, they have substantially created a university environment in which facile skepticism can thrive without being substantially contested.

Skeptical approaches have *potential* value. If you have no all-encompassing religious faith, no faith in historical destiny, the future of the

West, or anything comparably grand, you need to acquire your vision of the world somewhere. If it's from literature, then the various visions literature offers have to be inquired into skeptically. Surely it matters that women are denigrated in Milton and in Pope, that some novelistic voices assume an overbearing godlike authority, that the poor are, in this or that writer, inevitably cast as clowns. You can't buy all of literature wholesale if it's going to help draw your patterns of belief.

But demystifying theories are now overused, applied mechanically. It's all logocentrism, patriarchy, ideology. And in this the student environment—laid-back, skeptical, knowing—is, I believe, central. Full-out debunking is what plays with this clientele. Some have been doing it nearly as long as, if more crudely than, their deconstructionist teachers. In the context of the contemporary university, and cool consumer culture, a useful intellectual skepticism has become exaggerated into a fundamentalist caricature of itself. The teachers have buckled to their students' views.

At its best, multiculturalism can be attractive as well-deployed theory. What could be more valuable than encountering the best work of far-flung cultures and becoming a citizen of the world? But in the current consumer environment, where flattery plays so well, the urge to encounter the other can devolve into the urge to find others who embody and celebrate the right ethnic origins. So we put aside the African novelist Chinua Achebe's abrasive, troubling *Things Fall Apart* and gravitate toward hymns on Africa, cradle of all civilizations.

What about the phenomenon called political correctness? Raising the standard of civility and tolerance in the university has been—who can deny it?—a very good thing. Yet this admirable impulse has expanded to the point where one is enjoined to speak well—and only well—of women, blacks, gays, the disabled, in fact of virtually everyone. And we can owe this expansion in many ways to the student culture. Students now do not wish to be criticized, not in any form. (The culture of consumption never criticizes them, at least not *overtly*.) In the current university, the movement for urbane tolerance has devolved into an imperative against critical reaction, turning much of the



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intellectual life into a dreary Sargasso Sea. At a certain point, professors stopped being usefully sensitive and became more like careful retailers who have it as a cardinal point of doctrine never to piss the customers off.

To some professors, the solution lies in the movement called cultural studies. What students need, they believe, is to form a critical perspective on pop culture. It's a fine idea, no doubt. Students should be able to run a critical commentary against the stream of consumer stimulations in which they're immersed. But cultural-studies programs rarely work, because no matter what you propose by way of analysis, things tend to bolt downhill toward an uncritical discussion of students' tastes, into what they like and don't like. If you want to do a Frankfurt School-style analysis of *Braveheart*, you can be pretty sure that by mid-class Adorno and Horkheimer will be consigned to the junk heap of history and you'll be collectively weighing the charms of Mel Gibson. One sometimes wonders if cultural studies hasn't prospered because, under the guise of serious intellectual analysis, it gives the customers what they most want—easy pleasure, more TV. Cultural studies becomes nothing better than what its detractors claim it is—Madonna studies—when students kick loose from the critical perspective and groove to the product, and that, in my experience teaching film and pop culture, happens plenty.

On the issue of genius, as on multiculturalism and political correctness, we professors of the humanities have, I think, also failed to press back against our students' consumer tastes. Here we tend to nurse a pain or—to put it charitably—disparate views. In one mode, we're inclined to a programmatic debunking criticism. We call the concept of genius into question. But in our professional lives *per se*, we aren't usually disposed against the idea of distinguished achievement. We argue animatedly about the caliber of potential colleagues. We support a star system, in which some professors are far better paid, teach less, and under better conditions than the rest. In our own profession, we are creating a system that is the mirror image of the one we're dismantling in the curriculum. Ask a professor what she thinks of the work of Stephen Greenblatt, a leading critic of Shakespeare, and you'll hear it for an hour. Ask

her what her views are on Shakespeare's genius and she's likely to begin questioning the term along with the whole "discourse of evaluation." This dual sensibility may be intellectually incoherent. But in its awareness of what plays with students, it's conducive to good classroom evaluations and, in its awareness of where and how the professional bread is buttered, to self-advancement as well.

My overall point is this: It's not that a left-wing professorial coup has taken over the university. It's that at American universities, left-liberal politics have collided with the ethos of consumerism. The consumer ethos is winning.

**T**hen how do those who at least occasionally promote genius and high literary ideals look to current students? How do we appear, those of us who take teaching to be something of a performance art and who imagine that if you give yourself over completely to your subject you'll be rewarded with insight beyond what you individually command?

I'm reminded of an old piece of newsreel footage I saw once. The speaker (perhaps it was Lenin, maybe Trotsky) was haranguing a large crowd. He was expostulating, arm waving, carrying on. Whether it was flawed technology or the man himself, I'm not sure, but the orator looked like an intricate mechanical device that had sprung into fast-forward. To my students, who mistrust enthusiasm in every form, that's me when I start riffing about Freud or Blake. But more and more, as my evaluations showed, I've been replacing enthusiasm and intellectual animation with stand-up routines, keeping it all at arm's length, praising under the cover of irony.

It's too bad that the idea of genius has been denigrated so far, because it actually offers a live alternative to the demoralizing culture of hip in which most of my students are mired. By embracing the works and lives of extraordinary people, you can adapt new ideals to revise those that came courtesy of your parents, your neighborhood, your clan—or the tube. The aim of a good liberal-arts education was once, to adapt an observation by the scholar Walter Jackson Bate, to see that "we need not be the passive victims of what we deterministically call 'circumstances' (social, cultural, or reduc-



tively psychological-personal), but that by linking ourselves through what Keats calls an 'immortal free-masonry' with the great we can become freer—freer to be ourselves, to be what we most want and value."

But genius isn't just a personal standard; genius can also have political effect. To me, one of the best things about democratic thinking is the conviction that genius can spring up anywhere. Walt Whitman is born into the working class and thirty-six years later we have a poetic image of America that gives a passionate dimension to the legalistic brilliance of the Constitution. A democracy needs to constantly develop, and to do so it requires the most powerful visionary minds to interpret the present and to propose possible shapes for the future. By continuing to notice and praise genius, we create a culture in which the kind of poetic gamble that Whitman made—a gamble in which failure would have entailed rank humiliation, depression, maybe suicide—still takes place. By rebelling against established ways of seeing and saying things, genius helps us to apprehend how malleable the present is and how promising and fraught with danger is the future. If we teachers do not endorse genius and self-overcoming, can we be surprised when our students find their ideal images in TV's latest persona ads?

A world uninterested in genius is a despondent place, whose sad denizens drift from coffee bar to Prozac dispensary, unfired by ideals, by the glowing image of the self that one might become. As Northrop Frye says in a beautiful and now dramatically unfashionable sentence, "The artist who uses the same energy and genius that Homer and Isaiah had will find that he not only lives in the same palace of art as Homer and Isaiah, but lives in it at the same time." We ought not to deny the existence of such a place simply because we, or those we care for, find the demands it makes intimidating, the rent too high.

What happens if we keep trudging along this bleak course? What happens if our most intelligent students never learn to strive to overcome what they are? What if genius, and the imitation of genius, become silly, outmoded ideas? What you're likely to get are more and more one-dimensional men and women. These will be people who live for easy pleasures, for comfort and prosperity, who think of money first, then second, and third, who hug the status quo; people who believe in God as a sort of insurance policy (cover your bets); people who are never surprised. They will be people so pleased with themselves (when they're not in despair at the general pointlessness of their lives) that they cannot imagine humanity could do better. They'll think it

their highest duty to clone themselves as frequently as possible. They'll claim to be happy, and they'll live a long time.

It is probably time now to offer a spate of inspiring solutions. Here ought to come a list of reforms, with due notations about a core curriculum and various requirements. What the traditionalists who offer such solutions miss is that no matter what our current students are given to read, many of them will simply translate it into melodrama, with flat characters and predictable morals. (The unabated capitalist culture that conservative critics so often endorse has put students in a position to do little else.) One can't simply wave a curricular wand and reverse acculturation.

Perhaps it would be a good idea to try firing the counselors and sending half the deans back into their classrooms, dismantling the football team and making the stadium into a playground for local kids, emptying the fraternities, and boarding up the student-activities office. Such measures would convey the message that American colleges are not northern outposts of Club Med. A willingness on the part of the faculty to defy student conviction and affront them occasionally—to be usefully offensive—also might not be a bad thing. We professors talk a lot about subversion, which generally means subverting the views of people who never hear us talk or read our work. But to subvert the views of our students, our customers, that would be something else again.

Ultimately, though, it is up to individuals—and individual students in particular—to make their own way against the current sludgy tide. There's still the library, still the museum, there's still the occasional teacher who lives to find things greater than herself to admire. There are still fellow students who have not been cowed. Universities are inefficient, cluttered, archaic places, with many unguarded corners where one can open a book or gaze out onto the larger world and construe it freely. Those who do as much, trusting themselves against the weight of current opinion, will have contributed something to bringing this sad dispensation to an end. As for myself, I'm canning my low-key one-liners; when the kids' TV-based tastes come to the fore, I'll aim and shoot. And when it's time to praise genius, I'll try to do it in the right style, full-out, with faith that finer artistic spirits (maybe not Homer and Isaiah quite, but close, close), still alive somewhere in the ether, will help me out when my invention flags, the students doze, or the dean mutters into the phone. I'm getting back to a more exuberant style; I'll be expostulating and arm waving straight into the millennium, yes I will. ■



# IN THE HANDS OF THE RESTLESS POOR

By Earl Shorris on New York's Lower East Side

**N**ext month I will publish a book about poverty in America, but not the book I intended. The world took me by surprise—not once, but again and again. The poor themselves led me in directions I could not have imagined, especially the one that came out of a conversation in a maximum-security prison for women that is set, incongruously, in a lush Westchester suburb fifty miles north of New York City.

I had been working on the book for about three years when I went to the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for the first time. The staff and inmates had developed a program to deal with family violence, and I wanted to see how their ideas fit with what I had learned about poverty.

Numerous forces—hunger, isolation, illness, landlords, police, abuse, neighbors, drugs, criminals, and racism, among many others—exert themselves on the poor at all times and enclose them, making up a “surround of force” from which, it seems, they cannot escape. I had come to understand that this was what kept the poor from being political and that the absence of politics in their lives was what kept them poor. I don’t mean “political” in the sense of voting in an election but in the way Thucydides used the word: to mean activity with other people at every level, from the family to the neighborhood to the broader community to the city-state.

By the time I got to Bedford Hills, I had listened to more than six hundred people, some of them over the course of two or three years. Although my method is that of the *bricoleur*, the tinkerer who assembles a thesis of the bric-a-brac he finds in the world, I did not think there would be any more surprises. But I had not counted on what Viniece Walker was to say.

It is considered bad form in prison to speak of a person’s crime, and I will follow that precise etiquette here. I can tell you that Viniece Walker came to Bedford Hills when she was

twenty years old, a high school dropout who read at the level of a college sophomore, a graduate of crackhouses, the streets of Harlem, and a long alliance with a brutal man. On the surface Viniece has remained as tough as she was on the street. She speaks bluntly, and even though she is HIV positive and the virus has progressed during her time in prison, she still swaggers as she walks down the long prison corridors. While in prison, Nicie, as she is known to her friends, completed her high school requirements and began to pursue a college degree (psychology is the only major offered at Bedford Hills, but Nicie also took a special interest in philosophy). She became a counselor to women with a history of family violence and a comfortor to those with AIDS.

Only the deaths of other women cause her to stumble in the midst of her swaggering step, to spend days alone with the remorse that drives her to seek redemption. She goes through life as if she had been imagined by Dostoevsky, but even more complex than his fictions, alive, a person, a fair-skinned and freckled African-American woman, and in prison. It was she who responded to my sudden question, “Why do you think people are poor?”

We had never met before. The conversation around us focused on the abuse of women. Nicie’s eyes were perfectly opaque—hostile, prison eyes. Her mouth was set in the beginning of a sneer.

“You got to begin with the children,” she said, speaking rapidly, clipping out the street sounds as they came into her speech.

She paused long enough to let the change of direction take effect, then resumed the rapid, rhythmless speech. “You’ve got to teach the moral life of downtown to the children. And the way you do that, Earl, is by taking them downtown to plays, museums, concerts, lectures, where they can learn the moral life of downtown.”

I smiled at her, misunderstanding, thinking I

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Earl Shorris, *editor-at-large*, of Harper’s Magazine. He is the author of two books, including *New American Blues: A Journey Through Poverty to Democracy*, which will be published by W. W. Norton in October.



was indulging her. "And then they won't be poor anymore?"

She read every nuance of my response, and answered angrily, "And they won't be poor *no more*."

"What you mean is—"

"What I mean is what I said—a moral alternative to the street."

She didn't speak of jobs or money. In that, she was like the others I had listened to. No one had spoken of jobs or money. But how could the "moral life of downtown" lead any-

make the error of divorcing ethics from politics. Niece had simply said, in a kind of shorthand, that no one could step out of the panicking circumstance of poverty directly into the public world.

Although she did not say so, I was sure that when she spoke of the "moral life of downtown" she meant something that had happened to her. With no job and no money, a prisoner, she had undergone a radical transformation. She had followed the same path that led to the invention of politics in an-



one out from the surround of force? How could a museum push poverty away? Who can dress in statues or eat the past? And what of the political life? Had Niece skipped a step or failed to take a step? The way out of poverty was politics, not the "moral life of downtown." But to enter the public world, to practice the political life, the poor had first to learn to reflect. That was what Niece meant by the "moral life of downtown." She did not

make the error of divorcing ethics from politics. She had learned to reflect. In further conversation it became clear that when she spoke of "the moral life of downtown" she meant the humanities, the study of human constructs and concerns, which has been the source of reflection for the secular world since the Greeks first stepped back from nature to experience wonder at what they beheld. If the political life was the way out of poverty, the humanities provided an



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entrance to reflection and the political life. The poor did not need anyone to release them; an escape route existed. But to open this avenue to reflection and politics a major distinction between the preparation for the life of the rich and the life of the poor had to be eliminated.

Once Nicie had challenged me with her theory, the comforts of tinkering came to an end; I could no longer make an homage to the happenstance world and rest. To test Nicie's theory, students, faculty, and facilities were required. Quantitative measures would have to be developed; anecdotal information would also be useful. And the ethics of the experiment had to be considered: I resolved to do no harm. There was no need for the course to have a "sink or swim" character; it could aim to keep as many afloat as possible.

When the idea for an experimental course became clear in my mind, I discussed it with Dr. Jaime Inclán, director of the Roberto Clemente Family Guidance Center in lower Manhattan, a facility that provides counseling to poor people, mainly Latinos, in their own language and in their own community. Dr. Inclán offered the center's conference room for a classroom. We would put three metal tables end to end to approximate the boat-shaped tables used in discussion sections at the University of Chicago of the Hutchins era,<sup>1</sup> which I used as a model for the course. A card table in the back of the room would hold a coffeemaker and a few cookies. The setting was not elegant, but it would do. And the front wall was covered by a floor-to-ceiling blackboard.

Now the course lacked only students and teachers. With no funds and a budget that grew every time a new idea for the course crossed my mind, I would have to ask the faculty to donate its time and effort. Moreover, when Hutchins said, "The best education for the best is the best education for us all," he meant it: he insisted that full professors teach discussion sections in the college. If

the Clemente Course in the Humanities was to follow the same pattern, it would require a faculty with the knowledge and prestige that students might encounter in their first year at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, or Chicago.

I turned first to the novelist Charles Simons. He had been assistant editor of *The New York Times Book Review* and had taught at Columbia University. He volunteered to teach poetry, beginning with simple poems, Housman, and ending with Latin poetry. Grace Glueck, who writes art news and criticism for the *New York Times*, planned a course that began with cave paintings and ended in the late twentieth century. Timothy Koranda, who did his graduate work at MIT, had published journal articles on mathematical logic, but he had been away from his field for some years and looked forward to getting back to it. I planned to teach the American history course through documents, beginning with the Magna Carta, moving on to the second of Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, the Declaration of Independence, and so on through the documents of the Civil War. I would also teach the political philosophy class.

Since I was a naïf in this endeavor, it did not immediately occur to me that recruiting students would present a problem. I didn't know how many I needed. All I had were criteria for selection:

Age: 18–35.

Household income: Less than 150 percent of the Census Bureau's Official Poverty Threshold (though this was to change slightly).

Educational level: Ability to read a tabloid newspaper.

Educational goals: An expression of intent to complete the course.

Dr. Inclán arranged a meeting of community activists who could help recruit students. Lynette Lauretig of The Door, a program that provides medical and educational services to adolescents, and Angel Roman of the Grand Street Settlement, which offers work and training and GED programs, were both willing to give us access to prospective students. They also pointed out some practical considerations. The course had to provide bus and subway tokens, because fares ranged between three and six dollars per class per student, and the students could not afford sixty or even thirty dol-

<sup>1</sup> Under the guidance of Robert Maynard Hutchins (1929–1951), the University of Chicago required several courses in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences for the Bachelor of Arts degree. Hutchins developed the curriculum with the help of Mortimer Adler, among others; the Hutchins courses later influenced Adler's *Great Books* program.



lars a month for transportation. We also had to offer dinner or a snack, because the classes were to be held from 6:00 to 7:30 P.M.

The first recruiting session came only a few days later. Nancy Mamis-King, associate executive director of the Neighborhood Youth & Family Services program in the South Bronx, had identified some Clemente Course candidates and had assembled about twenty of her clients and their supervisors in a circle of chairs in a conference room. Everyone in the room was black or Latino, with the exception of one social worker and me.

After I explained the idea of the course, the white social worker was the first to ask a question: "Are you going to teach African history?"

"No. We'll be teaching a section on American history, based on documents, as I said. We want to teach the ideas of history so that—"

"You have to teach African history."

"This is America, so we'll teach American history. If we were in Africa, I would teach African history, and if we were in China, I would teach Chinese history."

"You're indoctrinating people in Western culture."

I tried to get beyond her. "We'll study African art," I said, "as it affects art in America. We'll study American history and literature; you can't do that without studying African-American culture, because culturally all Americans are black as well as white, Native American, Asian, and so on." It was no use; not one of them applied for admission to the course.

A few days later Lynette Lauretig arranged a meeting with some of her staff at The Door. We disagreed about the course. They thought it should be taught at a much lower level. Although I could not change their views, they agreed to assemble a group of Door members who might be interested in the humanities.

On an early evening that same week, about twenty prospective students were scheduled to meet in a classroom at The Door. Most of them came late. Those who arrived first slumped in their chairs, staring at the floor or greeting me with sullen glances. A few ate candy or what appeared to be the remnants of a meal. The students were mostly black and Latino, one was Asian, and five were white; two of the whites were immigrants who had severe problems with English. When I introduced myself, several of the students would not shake my hand, two or three refused even to look at me, one girl giggled, and the last person to volunteer his name, a young man dressed in a Tommy Hilfiger sweatshirt and wearing a cap turned sideways, drawled, "Hen-

ry Jones, but they call me Sleepy, because I got these sleepy eyes—"

"In our class, we'll call you Mr. Jones."

He smiled and slid down in his chair so that his back was parallel to the floor.

Before I finished attempting to shake hands with the prospective students, a waiflike Asian girl with her mouth half-full of cake said, "Can we get on with it? I'm bored."

I liked the group immediately.

Having failed in the South Bronx, I resolved to approach these prospective students differently. "You've been cheated," I said. "Rich people learn the humanities; you didn't. The humanities are a foundation for getting along in the world, for thinking, for learning to reflect on the world instead of just reacting to whatever force is turned against you. I think the humanities are one of the ways to become political, and I don't mean political in the sense of voting in an election but in the broad sense." I told them Thucydides' definition of politics.

"Rich people know politics in that sense. They know how to negotiate instead of using force. They know how to use politics to get along, to get power. It doesn't mean that rich people are good and poor people are bad. It simply means that rich people know a more effective method for living in this society.

"Do all rich people, or people who are in the middle, know the humanities? Not a chance. But some do. And it helps. It helps to live better and enjoy life more. Will the humanities make you rich? Yes. Absolutely. But not in terms of money. In terms of life.

"Rich people learn the humanities in private schools and expensive universities. And that's one of the ways in which they learn the political life. I think that is the real difference between the haves and have-nots in this country. If you want real power, legitimate power, the kind that comes from the people and belongs to the people, you must understand politics. The humanities will help.

"Here's how it works: We'll pay your subway fare; take care of your children, if you have them; give you a snack or a sandwich; provide you with books and any other materials you need. But we'll make you think harder, use your mind more fully, than you ever have before. You'll have to read and think about the same kinds of ideas you would encounter in a first-year course at Harvard or Yale or Oxford.

"You'll have to come to class in the snow and the rain and the cold and the dark. No one will coddle you, no one will slow down for you. There will be tests to take, papers to write. And I can't promise you anything but a



certificate of completion at the end of the course. I'll be talking to colleges about giving credit for the course, but I can't promise anything. If you come to the Clemente Course, you must do it because you want to study the humanities, because you want a certain kind of life, a richness of mind and spirit. That's all I offer you: philosophy, poetry, art history, logic, rhetoric, and American history.

"Your teachers will all be people of accomplishment in their fields," I said, and I spoke a little about each teacher. "That's the course. October through May, with a two-week break at Christmas. It is generally accepted in America that the liberal arts and the humanities in particular belong to the elites. I think you're the elites."

The young Asian woman said, "What are you getting out of this?"

"This is a demonstration project. I'm writing a book. This will be proof, I hope, of my idea about the humanities. Whether it succeeds or fails will be up to the teachers and you."

All but one of the prospective students applied for admission to the course.



I repeated the new presentation at the Grand Street Settlement and at other places around the city. There were about fifty candidates for the thirty positions in the course. Personal interviews began in early September.

Meanwhile, almost all of my attempts to raise money had failed. Only the novelist Starling Lawrence, who is also editor in chief of *W. W. Norton*, which had contracted to publish the book; the publishing house itself; and a small, private family foundation supported the experiment. We were far short of our budgeted expenses, but my wife, Sylvia, and I agreed that the cost was still very low, and we decided to go ahead.

Of the fifty prospective students who showed up at the Clemente Center for personal interviews, a few were too rich (a postal supervisor's son, a fellow who claimed his father owned a factory in Nigeria that employed sixty people) and more than a few could not read. Two home-care workers from Local 1199 could not arrange their hours to enable them to take the course. Some of the applicants were too young: a thirteen-year-old and two who had just turned sixteen.

Lucia Medina, a woman with five children who told me that she often answered the door at the single-room occupancy hotel where she lived with a butcher knife in her hand, was the oldest person accepted into the course. Carmen Quiñones, a recovering addict who had spent time in prison, was the next eldest. Both were in their early thirties.

The interviews went on for days.

**A**bel Lomas<sup>2</sup> shared an apartment and worked part-time wrapping packages at Macy's. His father had abandoned the family when Abel was born. His mother was murdered by his stepfather when Abel was thirteen. With no one to turn to and no place to stay, he lived on the streets, first in Florida, then back in New York City. He used the tiny stipend from his mother's Social Security to keep himself alive.

After the recruiting session at *The Door*, I drove up Sixth Avenue from Canal Street with Abel, and we talked about ethics. He had a street tough's delivery, spitting out his ideas in crudely formed sentences of four, five, eight words, strings of blunt declarations, with never a dependent clause to qualify his thoughts. He did not clear his throat with badinage, as timidity teaches us to do, nor did he waste his breath with tact.

"What do you think about drugs?" he asked, the strangely breathless delivery further coarsened by his Dominican accent. "My cousin is a dealer."

"I've seen a lot of people hurt by drugs."

"Your family has nothing to eat. You sell drugs. What's worse? Let your family starve or sell drugs?"

"Starvation and drug addiction are both bad, aren't they?"

<sup>2</sup> Not his real name.



ONE YOUNG WOMAN SUBMITTED A NEATLY TYPED ESSAY THAT SAID, "I WAS HOMELESS ONCE, THEN I LIVED FOR SOME TIME IN A SHELTER. RIGHT NOW, I AM OVERWHELMED BY DEBTS. I CANNOT AFFORD ALL THE FOOD I NEED..."

"Yes," he said, not "yeah" or "uh-huh" but a precise, almost formal "yes."

"So it's a question of the worse of two evils? How shall we decide?"

The question came up near Thirty-fourth Street, where Sixth Avenue remains hellishly traffic-jammed well into the night. Horns honked, people flooded into the street against the light. Buses and trucks and taxicabs threatened their way from one lane to the next where the overcrowded avenue crosses the equally crowded Broadway. As we passed Herald Square and made our way north again, I said, "There are a couple of ways to look at it. One comes from Immanuel Kant, who said that you should not do anything unless you want it to become a universal law; that is, unless you think it's what everybody should do. So Kant wouldn't agree to selling drugs or letting your family starve."

Again he answered with a formal "Yes."

"There's another way to look at it, which is to ask what is the greatest good for the greatest number: in this case, keeping your family from starvation or keeping tens, perhaps hundreds of people from losing their lives to drugs. So which is the greatest good for the greatest number?"

"That's what I think," he said.

"What?"

"You shouldn't sell drugs. You can always get food to eat. Welfare. Something."

"You're a Kantian."

"Yes."

"You know who Kant is?"

"I think so."

We had arrived at Seventy-seventh Street, where he got out of the car to catch the subway before I turned east. As he opened the car door and the light came on, the almost military neatness of him struck me. He had the newly cropped hair of a cadet. His clothes were clean, without a wrinkle. He was an orphan, a street kid, an immaculate urchin. Within a few weeks he would be nineteen years old, the Social Security payments would end, and he would have to move into a shelter.

Some of those who came for interviews were too poor. I did not think that was possible when we began, and I would like not to believe it now, but it was true. There is a point at which the level of forces that surround the

poor can become insurmountable, when there is no time or energy left to be anything but poor. Most often I could not recruit such people for the course; when I did, they soon dropped out.

Over the days of interviewing, a class slowly assembled. I could not then imagine who would last the year and who would not. One young woman submitted a neatly typed essay that said, "I was homeless once, then I lived for some time in a shelter. Right now, I have got my own space granted by the Partnership for the Homeless. Right now, I am living alone, with very limited means. Financially I am overwhelmed by debts. I cannot afford all the food I need..."

A brother and sister, refugees from Tashkent, lived with their parents in the farthest reaches of Queens, far beyond the end of the subway line. They had no money, and they had been refused admission by every school to which they had applied. I had not intended to accept immigrants or people who had difficulty with the English language, but I took them into the class.

I also took four who had been in prison, three who were homeless, three who were pregnant, one who lived in a drugged dream-state in which she was abused, and one whom I had known for a long time and who was dying of AIDS. As I listened to them, I wondered how the course would affect them. They had no public life, no place; they lived within the surround of force, moving as fast as they could, driven by necessity, without a moment to reflect. Why should they care about fourteenth-century Italian painting or truth tables or the death of Socrates?

Between the end of recruiting and the orientation session that would open the course, I made a visit to Bedford Hills to talk with Niece Walker. It was hot, and the drive up from the city had been unpleasant. I didn't yet know Niece very well. She didn't trust me, and I didn't know what to make of her. While we talked, she held a huge white pill in her hand. "For AIDS," she said.

"Are you sick?"

"My T-cell count is down. But that's neither here nor there. Tell me about the course, Earl. What are you going to teach?"



SHE SAID, "HOW CAN YOU TEACH PHILOSOPHY TO POOR PEOPLE  
WITHOUT PLATO'S ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE? THE GHETTO IS THE CAVE.  
EDUCATION IS THE LIGHT. POOR PEOPLE CAN UNDERSTAND THAT"

"Moral philosophy."

"And what does that include?"

She had turned the visit into an interrogation. I didn't mind. At the end of the conversation I would be going out into "the free world"; if she wanted our meeting to be an interrogation, I was not about to argue. I said, "We'll begin with Plato: the *Apology*, a little of the *Crito*, a few pages of the *Phaedo* so that they'll know what happened to Socrates. Then we'll read Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. I also want them to read Thucydides, particularly Pericles' Funeral Oration in order to make the connection between ethics and politics, to lead them in the direction I hope the course will take them. Then we'll end with *Antigone*, but read as moral and political philosophy as well as drama."

"There's something missing," she said, leaning back in her chair, taking on an air of superiority.

The drive had been long, the day was hot, the air in the room was dead and damp. "Oh, yeah," I said, "and what's that?"

"Plato's Allegory of the Cave. How can you teach philosophy to poor people without the Allegory of the Cave? The ghetto is the cave.

Education is the light. Poor people can understand that."

**A**t the beginning of the orientation at the Clemente Center a week later, each teacher spoke for a minute or two. Dr. Inclán and his research assistant, Patricia Vargas, administered the questionnaire he had devised to measure, as best he could, the role of force and the amount of reflection in the lives of the students. I explained that each class was going to be videotaped as another way of documenting the project. Then I gave out the first assignment: "In preparation for our next meeting, I would like you to read a brief selection from Plato's *Republic*: the Allegory of the Cave."

I tried to guess how many students would return for the first class. I hoped for twenty, expected fifteen, and feared ten. Sylvia, who had agreed to share the administrative tasks of the course, and I prepared coffee and cookies for twenty-five. We had a plastic container filled with subway tokens. Thanks to Starling Lawrence, we had thirty copies of Bernard Knox's *Newton Book of Classical Literature*,

which contained all of the texts for the philosophy section except the *Republic* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

At six o'clock there were only ten students seated around the long table, but by six-fifteen the number had doubled, and a few minutes later two more straggled in out of the dusk. I had written a time line on the blackboard, showing them the temporal progress of thinking—from the role of myth in Neolithic societies to *The Gilgamesh Epic* and forward to the Old Testament, Confucius, the Greeks, the New Testament, the Koran, the *Epic of Son-Jara*, and ending with Nahuatl and Maya poems, which took us up to the contact between Europe and America, where the history course began. The time line served as context and geography as well as history: no race, no major culture was ignored. "Let's agree," I told them, "that we are all human, whatever our origins. And now let's go into Plato's cave."

I told them that there would be no lectures in the philosophy section of the course; we would use the Socratic method, which is called maieutic dialogue. "'Maieutic' comes from the Greek word for midwifery. I'll take the role of midwife in our dialogue. Now, what do I mean by that? What does a midwife do?"

It was the beginning of a love affair, the first moment of their infatuation with Socrates. Later, Abel Lomas would characterize that moment in his no-nonsense fashion, saying that it was the first time anyone had ever paid attention to their opinions.

Grace Glueck began the art history class in a darkened room lit with slides of the Lascaux caves and next turned the students' attention to Egypt, arranging for them to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see the Temple of Dendur and the Egyptian Galleries. They arrived at the museum on a Friday evening. Darlene Codd brought her two-year-old son. Pearl Lau was late, as usual. One of the students, who had told me how much he was looking forward to the museum visit, didn't show up, which surprised me. Later I learned that he had been arrested for jumping a turnstile in a subway station on his way to the museum and was being held in a prison cell under the Brooklyn criminal courthouse. In the Temple of Dendur, Samantha Smoot asked questions of Felicia Blum, a museum



lecturer. Samantha was the student who had burst out with the news, in one of the first sessions of the course, that people in her neighborhood believed it "wasn't no use goin' to school, because the white man wouldn't let you up no matter what." But in a hall where the statuary was of half-human, half-animal female figures, it was Samantha who asked what the glyphs meant, encouraging Felicia Blum to read them aloud, to translate them into English. Toward the end of the evening, Grace led the students out of the halls of antiquities into the Rockefeller Wing, where she told them of the connections of culture and art in Mali, Benin, and the Pacific Islands. When the students had collected their coats and stood together near the entrance to the museum, preparing to leave, Samantha stood apart, a tall, slim young woman, dressed in a deerstalker cap and a dark blue peacoat. She made an exaggerated farewell wave at us and returned to Egypt—her ancient mirror.

Charles Simmons began the poetry class with poems as puzzles and laughs. His plan was to surprise the class, and he did. At first he read the poems aloud to them, interrupting himself with footnotes to bring them along. He showed them poems of love and of seduction, and satiric commentaries on those poems by later poets. "Let us read," the students demanded, but Charles refused. He tantalized them with the opportunity to read poems aloud. A tug-of-war began between him and the students, and the standoff was ended not by Charles directly but by Hector Anderson. When Charles asked if anyone in the class wrote poetry, Hector raised his hand.

"Can you recite one of your poems for us?" Charles said.

Until that moment, Hector had never volunteered a comment, though he had spoken well and intelligently when asked. He preferred to slouch in his chair, dressed in full camouflage gear, wearing a nylon stocking over his hair and eating slices of fresh cantaloupe or honeydew melon.

In response to Charles's question, Hector slid up to a sitting position. "If you turn that camera off," he said: "I don't want anybody using my lyrics." When he was sure the red light of the video camera was off, Hector stood and recited verse after verse of a poem that belonged somewhere in the triangle formed by Ginsberg's *Howl*, the Book of Lamentations, and hip-hop. When Charles and the students finished applauding, they asked Hector to say the poem again, and he did. Later Charles told me, "That kid is the real thing." Hector's discomfort with Sylvia and me turned to ease. He

came to our house for a small Christmas party and at other times. We talked on the telephone about a scholarship program and about what steps he should take next in his education. I came to know his parents. As a student, he began quietly, almost secretly, to surpass many of his classmates.

Timothy Koranda was the most professorial of the professors. He arrived precisely on time, wearing a hat of many styles—part fedora, part Borsalino, part Stetson, and at least one-half World War I campaign hat. He taught logic during class hours, filling the blackboard from floor to ceiling, wall to wall, drawing the intersections of sets here and truth tables there and a great square of oppositions in the middle of it all. After class, he walked with students to the subway, chatting about Zen or logic or Heisenberg.

On one of the coldest nights of the winter, he introduced the students to logic problems stated in ordinary language that they could solve by reducing the phrases to symbols. He passed out copies of a problem, two pages long, then wrote out some of the key phrases on the blackboard. "Take this home with you," he said, "and at our next meeting we shall see who has solved it. I shall also attempt to find the answer."

By the time he finished writing out the key phrases, however, David Iskhakov raised his hand. Although they listened attentively, neither David nor his sister Susana spoke often in class. She was shy, and he was embarrassed at his inability to speak perfect English.

"May I go to blackboard?" David said. "And will see if I have found correct answer to zis problem."

Together Tim and David erased the blackboard, then David began covering it with signs and symbols. "If first man is earning this money, and second man is closer to this town . . .," he said, carefully laying out the conditions. After five minutes or so, he said, "And the answer is: B will get first to Cleveland!"

Samantha Smoot shouted, "That's not the answer. The mistake you made is in the first part there, where it says who earns more money."

Tim folded his arms across his chest, happy. "I shall let you all take the problem home," he said.

When Sylvia and I left the Clemente Center that night, a knot of students was gathered outside, huddled against the wind. Snow had begun to fall, a slippery powder on the gray ice that covered all but a narrow space down the center of the sidewalk. Samantha and David stood in the middle of the group, still arguing over the answer to the problem. I leaned in for



BETWEEN OCTOBER AND MAY, STUDENTS FELL TO AIDS, PREGNANCY, JOB OPPORTUNITIES, PERNICIOUS ANEMIA, CLINICAL DEPRESSION, A SCHIZOPHRENIC CHILD, BUT OF THIRTY STUDENTS, SIXTEEN COMPLETED THE COURSE

a moment to catch the character of the argument. It was even more polite than it had been in the classroom, because now they governed themselves.

One Saturday morning in January, David Howell telephoned me at home. "Mr. Shores," he said, Anglicizing my name, as many of the students did.

"Mr. Howell," I responded, recognizing his voice.

"How you doin', Mr. Shores?"

"I'm fine. How are you?"

"I had a little problem at work."

Uh-oh, I thought, bad news was coming. David is a big man, generally good-humored but with a quick temper. According to his mother, he had a history of violent behavior. In the classroom he had been one of the best students, a steady man, twenty-four years old, who always did the reading assignments and who often made interesting connections between the humanities and daily life. "What happened?"

"Mr. Shores, there's a woman at my job, she said some things to me and I said some things to her. And she told my supervisor I had said things to her, and he called me in about it. She's forty years old and she don't have no social life, and I have a good social life, and she's jealous of me."

"And then what happened?" The tone of his voice and the timing of the call did not portend good news.

"Mr. Shores, she made me so mad, I wanted to smack her up against the wall. I tried to talk to some friends to calm myself down a little, but nobody was around."

"And what did you do?" I asked, fearing this was his one telephone call from the city jail.

"Mr. Shores, I asked myself, 'What would Socrates do?'"

David Howell had reasoned that his co-worker's envy was not his problem after all, and he had dropped his rage.

One evening, in the American history section, I was telling the students about Gordon Wood's ideas in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. We were talking about the revolt by some intellectuals against classical learning at the turn of the eighteenth century, including Benjamin Franklin's late-life change of

heart, when Henry Jones raised his hand.

"If the Founders loved the humanities so much, how come they treated the natives so badly?"

I didn't know how to answer this question. There were confounding explanations to offer about changing attitudes toward Native Americans, vaguely useful references to views of Rousseau and James Fenimore Cooper. For a moment I wondered if I should tell them about Heidegger's Nazi past. Then I saw Abel Lomas's raised hand at the far end of the table. "Mr. Lomas," I said.

Abel said, "That's what Aristotle means by incontinence, when you know what's morally right but you don't do it, because you're overcome by your passions."

The other students nodded. They were all inheritors of wounds caused by the incontinence of educated men; now they had an ally in Aristotle, who had given them a way to analyze the actions of their antagonists.

Those who appreciate ancient history understand the radical character of the humanities. They know that politics did not begin in a perfect world but in a society even more flawed than ours: one that embraced slavery, denied the rights of women, practiced a form of homosexuality that verged on pedophilia, and endured the intrigues and corruption of its leaders. The genius of that society originated in man's re-creation of himself through the recognition of his humanness as expressed in art, literature, rhetoric, philosophy, and the unique notion of freedom. At that moment, the isolation of the private life ended and politics began.

The winners in the game of modern society, and even those whose fortune falls in the middle, have other means to power: they are included at birth. They know this. And they know exactly what to do to protect their place in the economic and social hierarchy. As Allan Bloom, author of the nationally best-selling tract in defense of elitism, *The Closing of the American Mind*, put it, they direct the study of the humanities exclusively at those young people who "have been raised in comfort and with the expectation of ever increasing comfort."

In the last meeting before graduation, the



Clemente students answered the same set of questions they'd answered at orientation. Between October and May, students had fallen to AIDS, pregnancy, job opportunities, pernicious anemia, clinical depression, a schizophrenic child, and other forces, but of the thirty students admitted to the course, sixteen had completed it, and fourteen had earned credit from Bard College. Dr. Inclán found that the students' self-esteem and their abilities to divine and solve problems had significantly increased; their use of verbal aggression as a tactic for resolving conflicts had significantly decreased. And they all had notably more appreciation for the concepts of benevolence, spirituality, universalism, and collectivism.

It cost about \$2,000 for a student to attend the Clemente Course. Compared with unemployment, welfare, or prison, the humanities are a bargain. But coming into possession of the faculty of reflection and the skills of politics leads to a choice for the poor—and whatever they choose, they will be dangerous: they may use politics to get along in a society based on the game, to escape from the surround of force into a gentler life, to behave as citizens, and nothing more; or they may choose to oppose the game itself. No one can predict the effect of politics, although we all would like to think that wisdom goes our way. That is why the poor are so often mobilized and so rarely politicized. The possibility that they will adopt a moral view other than that of their mentors can never be discounted.

And who wants to run that risk?

**O**n the night of the first Clemente Course graduation, the students and their families filled the eighty-five chairs we crammed into the conference room where classes had been held. Robert Martin, associate dean of Bard College, read the graduates' names. David Dinkins, the

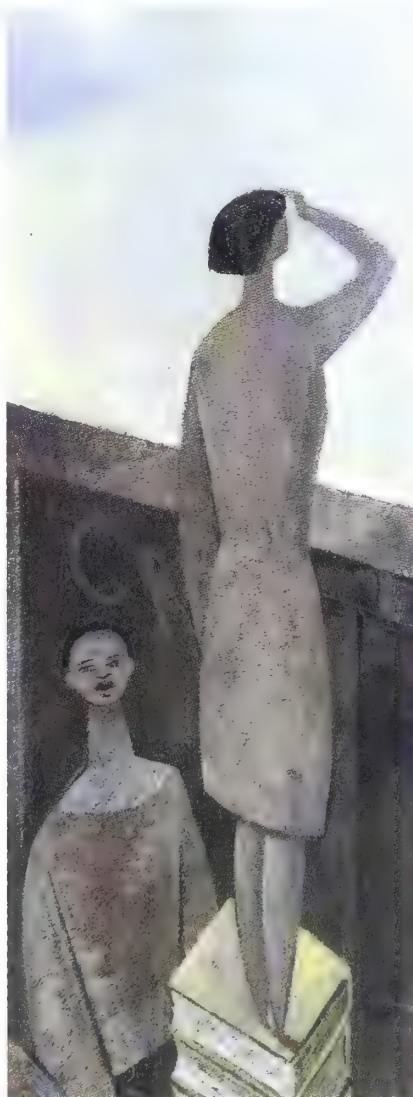
former mayor of New York City, handed out the diplomas. There were speeches and presentations. The students gave me a plaque on which they had misspelled my name. I offered a

few words about each student, congratulated them, and said finally, "This is what I wish for you: May you never be more active than when you are doing nothing . . ." I saw their smiles of recognition at the words of Cato, which I had written on the blackboard early in the course. They could recall again too the moment when we had come to the denouement of Aristotle's brilliantly constructed thriller, the *Nicomachean Ethics*—the idea that in the contemplative life man was most like God. One or two, perhaps more of the students, closed their eyes. In the momentary stillness of the room it was possible to think.

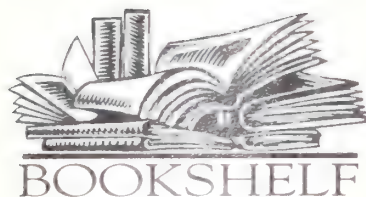
The Clemente Course in the Humanities ended a second year in June 1997. Twenty-eight new students had enrolled; fourteen graduated. Another version of the course will begin this fall in Yucatán, Mexico, using classical Maya literature in Maya.

On May 14, 1997, Viniece Walker came up for parole for the second time. She had served more than ten years of her sentence, and she had been the best of prisoners. In a version of the Clemente Course held at the prison, she had been my teaching assistant. After a brief hearing, her request for parole was denied. She will serve two more years before the parole board will reconsider her case.

A year after graduation, ten of the first sixteen Clemente Course graduates were attending four-year colleges or going to nursing school; four of them had received full scholarships to Bard College. The other graduates were attending community college or working full-time. Except for one: she had been fired from her job in a fast-food restaurant for trying to start a union. ■







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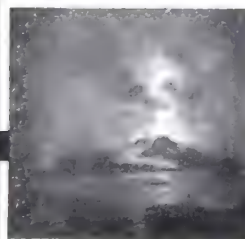
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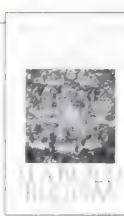
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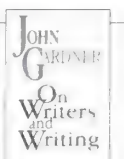
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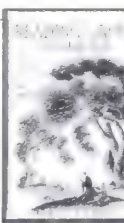
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# MEAN SEASON

In Northern Ireland,  
the Troubles come as regular as rain

By Adrian McKinty



**A**fter living in the United States for a few years, it's difficult to readjust to a society in which the past assaults you at every corner and where heroic battles happened not hundreds of years ago but yesterday—even hours ago—and the most important thing is to find out whether someone is from your tribe or the other. When we Northern Irish meet each other socially, we always try to find out quickly whether the other is Protestant or Catholic—jaffa or fenian, to use the pejoratives. Various strategies to accomplish this have sprung up. Catholics, for example, are supposed to pronounce the letter “h” as “haitch,” Protestant surnames are “Mac” not “O,” Catholics call Londonderry “Derry,” and Protestants rarely use that suffix. Ever so coyly, then, we ask our new acquaintances

to spell something or try to get them to utter a place name that will give it all away. Of course, we are all acutely aware of the game and employ counterstrategies when it furthers our designs. It pays to be paranoid in a place where a few trivial theological differences are grounds for murder.

That old anxiety begins to seep back into my brain as my wife and I stand gazing over the bleak seascape of Belfast Lough. It's July, and we're standing in the seaside town of Carrickfergus, my hometown, eight miles up the coast from Belfast. The sky is cemetery gray, and the slate rain is coming down in sheets. The cold wind whips at us straight from some frozen wasteland in the Arctic Circle, and the haar fog and damp air have slunk beneath our coats, dis-

solving a caustic chill deep into our scunnered bones. A dead seal lies on the beach, and the gale from off the lough brings up the smell of de-

caying seaweed and effluent. Oil floats on the water, and behind us the massive coal-fired power station pumps out a snarl of black smoke and toxins, depositing a fine layer of ash on all the northward-facing surfaces. My wife, Leah, an American, visited here once before when we were on our Christmas vacation from Oxford. It was warmer then.

That December I told my family on the phone that Leah was coming to Carrick and that she was a Yank and from Boston, forgetting that this would cause a small-scale panic among my friends and relations. For Ulster Protestants, the Boston Irish are just about the scum of the earth. They are the people who send money to the IRA to buy explosives from Qaddafi so that they can blow up

Adrian McKinty's first novel, *Orange Rhymes with Everything*, was published in January by William Morrow & Co.



Protestants at war memorials or waiting on line at fish-and-chips shops. To the Ulster Prods, the Boston Irish are the underwriters of the IRA's campaign for an ethnically pure, homogeneous, Catholic, Gaelic Ireland, and it's to New York or Boston that IRA men flee for safe haven. The IRA, of course, considers its activities to be political, and, in general, Irish-Catholic America embraces this idea. The nonextradition of IRA men to the U.K. is perhaps the biggest cause of Unionist ire. More than once people have asked me what Americans would think if Timothy McVeigh were to escape to Ulster and Northern Ireland offered him asylum on the grounds that his crimes were political.

So, while not quite waiting with lynch ropes for us at the airport, my family and friends were incredibly relieved to learn that Leah is Jewish. One might think that this made her neutral between the religious protagonists of Northern Ireland, but, in fact, no one escapes, as an old Troubles joke illustrates nicely: A man is walking down an alley in Belfast, and another comes up behind him and puts a gun to his head. "Are you Prod or Catholic?" asks the gunman. "Actually, I'm Jewish," the first replies.

"Well, are you a Protestant Jew or a Catholic Jew?"

**T**he rain turns horizontal, and Leah's umbrella blows inside out. We run for shelter, but the only trees growing nearby are palms the local council planted to give the town a Mediterranean feel. The palms do quite well in Carrick, where because of the Gulf Stream it rarely freezes, despite being at the same latitude as Moscow. Of course, the Gulf Stream also brings moisture, and in Northern Ireland we tend to get over two hundred days of rain a year. After only three years away, I've forgotten the most important thing for any summer visit to Northern Ireland: always bring a thick, waterproof overcoat.

Leah and I have braved the harsh weather for a reason: July 12 marks the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne, when the Protestant King William III, prince of Orange,

crushed the armies of the Catholic King James II in 1690. Each year, on every weekend in July, Orangemen (hard-line Protestants) march through the towns and villages of Ulster. The Twelfth itself, when up to 100,000 Orangemen take to the streets, is a public holiday. Protestants outnumber Catholics in Northern Ireland by only about 70,000, so July also marks the beginning of Catholic counterparades and demonstrations. Given all this, one might conclude that July is precisely not the time to visit Carrickfergus. But in the summer of 1996 the peace process is still "ongoing," and my parents and I foolishly decide that a visit for the Twelfth will be a colorful ethnic adventure for Leah.

Things turn ugly just before we arrive. In a small village called Drumcree, a traditional Orange march is halted by police, who insist that the marchers reroute their parade to avoid a Catholic housing project. The Orangemen demand the route they have marched since "time immemorial." The police refuse to let the march take place, and Orangemen from all over Northern Ireland promise civil disobedience until the marchers are allowed through. The day we arrive, Orangemen begin blocking all the major roads, airports, and train routes in and out of Ulster. So much for our ethnic adventure; we must now avoid the marches at all cost.\*

**I**n the 1980s, Carrick's three major manufacturing plants closed down, putting much of the town's population of 33,000 out of work. Since this was just after the peak years of terrorist violence in Ulster, the town planners naturally concluded

\* In 1997, the scene will repeat itself as riots again break out as a result of the Drumcree march. Catholic protesters will hurl rocks at the security forces and will be repaid with a barrage of plastic bullets. The IRA will shoot a policeman in the town of Coalisland, and it will again look as if Hobbes's state of nature will erupt with its well-known and undesirable consequences. Total war will be avoided, however, after the Orange Order, "for the greater good of the province," cancels marches that go through Catholic areas, and the IRA reinstates its cease-fire.

ed that tourism was the way to secure a future for the borough and prevent it from becoming a ghost town like so many other places in the British Isles' declining industrial regions.

At one time, Carrickfergus did have a few genuine tourist attractions. Jonathan Swift lived in the town for a year while he was a parson at Kilroot Parish Church, and it was here that he wrote "A Tale of a Tub." He had a horrible time, finding the Presbyterians even more obnoxious than the papists. His famous Round House was still standing late as the 1970s but was demolished to make way for the Kilroot Power Station. The playwright William Congreve lived in Carrick as a boy, and so did Louis MacNeice. Another friend and one of the Pylon poets of the 1930s (so called because of the fondness for industrial imagery) MacNeice crafted some very fine verse and is certainly one of the best Irish poets of the century. His father was a rector at the Church of St. Nicholas, and Louis lived in the rectory on the North Road. His mother died while he was a boy, and the house became a haunted mansion for him, inspiring some of his most vivid recollections and greatest works. In his impressive poem "Carrickfergus" MacNeice described the view from his window in a stanza that still captures the essence of the place:

The brook ran yellow from the factories  
stinking of chlorine,  
The yarn-mill called its funeral cry  
noon;  
Our lights looked over the lough  
the lights of Bangor  
Under the peacock aura of a drowned  
moon.

The MacNeice residence, in most communities, would be something of a landmark. In Carrick the local council had the great foresight to bulldoze it and build an old folks' home in its place. They call it MacNeice Fold in the late poet's memory.

The town still has a well-preserved twelfth-century Norman castle, but unfortunately for the tourist trade, the smell of medieval urine coming up from the dungeons is a defining characteristic. Having destroyed the few authentic sites of the



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torical and cultural interest, and apparently unsure of the castle's potential as a selling point, it seems that the authorities chose to manufacture their attractions in the desperate hope of drawing coach parties of Irish Americans up north of the border, away from the more traditional sights in Dublin and the Ring of Kerry. This was a more curious ploy than it first appears when one considers that Carrickfergus is 90 percent Protestant and one of the strongest bastions of the Orange Order and Unionism in Ulster. The town has had only one Catholic mayor since 1542, and its only Catholic high school was forced to close in the early 1990s due to lack of attendance. It seems that the council was untroubled by the oddity of a fiercely Unionist place like Carrick sucking up to Irish-Catholic Americans.

**W**e decide to tour the new attractions, stopping first at the Andrew Jackson Centre, a replica of the cottage that President Jackson's parents might have lived in before they left for America. (The original was demolished to make way for a railroad.) It's a sad mixture of kitsch and commerce crammed full of faux antiques, potato-famine memorabilia, and craftworks by local artisans. My wife is probably the only American who has ever been here, and the elderly custodian shows extraordinary delight in seeing her, regaling us with tales about how harsh life was for Jackson's parents and suggesting that the late president was in fact born right here in Carrick. He thinks Jackson concealed this inconvenient fact to avoid falling afoul of the U.S. Constitution's prohibition on foreign-born citizens becoming president. He shows us the fireplace where Mrs. Jackson used to make soda bread and the loom where Mr. Jackson made his own clothes.

It is all terribly convincing, and if I hadn't seen workmen from the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum construct the cottage a few summers before I might be persuaded. At the end of our tour we take some authentic Irish peat as a souvenir. Leah adds her name to the visitors' book and writes

"quite nice" in the comments section.

On our way out we run into a couple of bedraggled-looking German backpackers searching for the bus to Belfast. For some reason German tourists are fascinated with Northern Ireland, which is surprising, because after the Irish Americans they are just about the most reviled ethnicity for Ulster's Protestant community. Memories of the Belfast Blitz, when a virtually undefended city was fire-bombed and heavily damaged by the Luftwaffe, are very strong. Still, the Germans come and seem to have a reasonably good time touring the "war zones" and taking pictures of ethnic graffiti.

"You are also tourists?" one of the German men asks me.

"Locals," I reply.

"You are Protestant or Catholic?" he asks.

I am a little taken aback by such a direct question.

"Protestant," I tell him anyway.

"You hate Catholics, yes?" he asks cheerfully.

**I**t's still raining, so we slip into Dobbins Inn for lunch. This is a nice little bar, at least five centuries old, where I used to come when I was sixteen for underage drinking. Leah and I sip our pints of stout and stare out the window at a couple of cops on High Street. A mist has come up from the lough, oozing into the lanes and alleyways and softening the edges of the concrete shops and the Japanese and German cars and the sterile architecture of the Northern Bank.

Carrick is normally a quiet town, and as far as I recall there has been only one major bombing incident here in the last few decades. In the 1970s the IRA blew up Bell's Toy Shop. I was about nine or ten years old and terribly excited by the whole thing. I got a lot of cheap parts for my train set at the "Bomb Damage Sale." Nowadays there are a few hoods, and the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association (Protestant paramilitaries) run some of the tougher housing projects, but on the whole you don't see much in the way of "particulars." The cops outside on High Street are more likely to be checking

for expired driver's licenses than for potential suicide bombers.

We watch them for a while and recognize one, a guy I'll call Pete McDuff. He's tall and wears a Zapa mustache in a vain attempt to cover up a huge mass of scar tissue on his face, the result of having a spiderweb tattoo removed prior to his police interview. He looks like a burn victim who has had plastic surgery in some ill-prepared Romanian clinic. After high school, Pete joined the military police but was court-martialed and dishonorably discharged after biting the ear off a prisoner he'd been escorting to an army lockup. We step outside to say hello.

"Adrian, what about ye?"

"Dead on, Pete, and you?"

"Nae tae bad. Who's this, you missus?" he asks, and soon discovers that she's American.

"Ach, Adrian, after the old green card, eh? Eh? You'll have to hook me up to some ould American doll. Join the NYPD instead of these jokers."

"I will, Pete," I say, and he grins boyishly, making his face suddenly attractive again. He winks at me and I wink back, not really knowing he's sending me some code or just winding me up some more about the green card.

"How long have you been in the peelers?" I ask him.

"Seems like forever. I'm doing bloody traffic duty cos I shot some wee girl in Londonderry."

"Jesus, Pete, you shot somebody?"

"Aye. In a riot. Shot her with the plastic-bullet gun."

From across the lough comes a strong gust of wind, and a noise swirling mass of dead leaves and trash blows by us, twisting on down the sidewalk. I look at Pete and wonder if I misheard him.

"You shot a girl? And she died?"

"Shite no. Got her claim in though. Half a mill. Says she lost an eye. I don't believe it myself."

As we turn the corner of Lancasterian Street, Pete waves, takes out his revolver, and pretends to shoot us both.

**A**lthough Carrickfergus chooses not to advertise its brushes with literary greatness, you will find a great



al of information here about William of Orange. During the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89 (as we're taught in school), brave King William came from Holland to overthrow his father-in-law—tyrannical, Catholic King James. A year later, on his way to meet King James at the Battle of the Boyne, William's army landed in Carrickfergus. In Protestant Ulster, William is everywhere. He is painted on walls, on the sides of houses, on sidewalks, on roads, sometimes even on roofs. Usually he is astride a white charger, and in most cases the horse is rampant alongside the river Boyne. When I lived in Carrick as a boy there were several King Williams on our street. The curbstones around each mural were painted red, white, and blue, and above the king there was usually NO SURRENDER OR REMEMBER 1690 written in blue. In general, William was painted without perspective and floating against a dull background, very reminiscent of Giotto's early madonnas. Sometimes he would be holding a sword aloft, and just as often there would be a dead Catholic lying underneath his horse. Because he actually set foot in Carrickfergus, landing at the pier in the local harbor, William means even more to us than he would to the average Protestant town. Each year for the Prods restage William's landing, the town council turning out in full regalia, with horses, swords, and pikestaffs at the ready. The king generally arrives by motorboat, often rather the worse for drink taken to soothe his nerves on the journey over the rough waters of Belfast Lough. Despite the possibility of a storm coming, we head down to the lough to see the famous spot. On a clear day you can see Scotland, though in the two and a half decades living in Carrick I can recall only three or four clear days at most. The view to the north is somewhat obstructed by the Broom Power Station and its 656-foot chimney, the highest in Ireland. To the southeast is the low-lying shore of county Down, with its brown and ochre drumlins, pale macadam roads, and hard-faced settlements—azure and white and am-

ber on the emerald face of the land. Farther along the shore lies the big gray smudge of Belfast, factories and office blocks and the huge yellow cranes of the shipyard all perched precariously on the sludge and mud of the river Lagan and a line of brown soot hovering over the city like some sinister familiar. To the west is the town itself and a sprawl of new identikit housing developments growing indecorously into the Antrim hills as migrants pour in from Belfast, seeking a better life in what is now the suburbs of the city.

The fog has lifted by the time we reach the harbor, where the town council decided to close down the thriving commercial port and put a marina instead. The port, which was built in 1550, was one of the few industries left in Carrick and did a roaring trade because its berthing fees were considerably cheaper than those down the coast in Belfast. The council, however, felt that a working port didn't fit in with the town's new upscale leisure image. Perhaps the planning committee believed that a marina would bring in a better class of person. Every year the number of people making solo yacht crossings over the Atlantic was increasing, and the council believed that if they built a marina much of that traffic would come to Carrickfergus in Northern Ireland rather than the plush royal yacht clubs in the south of England or Scotland. As a consequence, local taxes were raised, a marina was built, and security fences were constructed to prevent the local hoi polloi from coming down to gawk at the boats. Inexplicably, the transatlantic yacht boom never materialized, and the harbor fell into a dangerous state of disrepair. On the brighter side, the local gentry can now park their boats safely in Carrickfergus rather than have them bobbing about in the contaminated waters of Belfast Lough.

We stop for a breather at the old Fisherman's Quay. It was here one Christmas Eve that I and everyone else in the local Chinese takeaway witnessed a suicidal woman in a red Toyota drive right off the end of the pier and straight into the lough. Apparently her dog was in the car with her, and in the cold and the dark

both of them were drowned. Her husband was a drunk and he beat her, but for days afterward everyone was talking about what a shame it was for the poor dog.

We walk by the fortified police station and then back to the Castle Green, where we find that a contentious new statue of King Billy is being fenced off by an elderly council workman. I look at the statue and immediately can see the source of the controversy. Normally, King William is portrayed as a milky white Aryan with flowing locks and a John Wayne physique. Here William is sculpted as he actually was: a short, buck-toothed hunchback with bad skin. The workman says that he's fencing it off because of anonymous threats.

"It's a papist thing, I think," the workman tells me in an Irish country accent. He is wearing a flat cap, has no teeth, and is such a stereotype that I half expect to see John Ford and a camera crew lurking around somewhere.

"What do you mean a papist thing?" I ask.

"Well you see now, boy. Yon statue was done by a wee lassie from Dublin. Cost twenty-five thousand pound. And they were gonna use yon money to put in disabled toilets. But no. Stuck up yon monstrosity instead."

"And you think the sculptor was a Catholic?" I ask. (I later learn that the sculptor was actually a lad from Belfast.)

The old man nods grimly.

"Aye, had to be. Stands to reason. Should have seen it. Quite a wee tadoo at the unveiling. Consternation. Mayor's wife had one of her turns. Had to get her water. Papist plot. One o' them arsepeonage things, so it is. In the paper too. That's why I'm fencing it off. Threats."

"Threats against the statue?"

"Aye, surprised if it lasts the summer. Some wain'll blow the bugger up."

"Blow up the statue?" Leah asks incredulously.

"Oh aye. Blow it up. You're American, are you? One o' them fake Irish-American shites?" he asks suspiciously. Leah looks at me, unsure



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at how to respond I don't know. I'm looking up, and wondering when the storm will hit. An ominous line of black cloud is coming up from Strangford Lough and the Mourne Mountains; low and heavy, it looks like the back of some big, grizzled wolfhound, sleekit and belligerent and ready to unleash itself. The drizzle now is only a portent of a darker sky to come. I turn up the collar on my coat and find that I'm shivering.

"No," Leah says after a pause. The old man smacks his gums.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I'm Jewish."

"Jew, huh? Not a fenian?"

"Nope."

"Aye, well you're lucky. Jewish, eh? That must make me the luckiest PLO man in Carrick," he says laughing, giving us the punch line without even telling the joke.

"Tourists, the pair of you? From America. You should go to the Knight Ride. Marvelous, so it is. Tourist thing. Cost three million pound. You should see it."

Later my younger brother, Gareth, suggests that we go up to Belfast to see *Mission: Impossible*. I'm a little wary. Whereas Carrick is a small, dull, coastal town, Belfast is big and sprawled out and sinister. Prewar "back-to-back" houses huddle together in the tight, angular streets. Children play soccer on the corners, or tag, or emulate their fathers by throwing marching sticks twenty feet into the air and trying to catch them. It's a tough city made worse by the nasty turn the marching season has taken, but we hear on the radio that the Orangemen manning the roadblocks usually go home in the evenings, their aim of complete civil disobedience apparently being secondary to their need for the standard Ulster fried dinner.

We make it into the city without incident. The MGM cinema is in the relatively quiet, upscale university district, which lacks the sectarian graffiti of the Protestant and Catholic ghettos. It is red-bricked and subdued. There are no paramilitary figures painted on the walls and

the loft. It's a nice part of town. The movie starts, and within two minutes I lose all track of what's going on and don't much care. When the lights come on, the audience groans and pours out of the theater to find the afternoon sky black with smoke and full of military helicopters. Scores of police in riot gear walk around near their steel-plated Land Rovers, nervously hanging on to their plastic-bullet, gas, and submachine guns. In the distance sirens are sounding along the city's arterial roads, and down one side street I see British Army soldiers looking sullen and afraid in their green armored personnel carriers.

Just outside the cinema, a Loyalist accordion band blocks the street. It's made up of sixteen- and seventeen-year-old boys and girls kitted out in bright orange uniforms and marching time behind a police barricade. Apparently scenes like this are being carried out all over Belfast, with bands and Orangemen marching and blocking the roads in an attempt to frustrate and confuse the police.

We're standing between the feisty Lagan River and the pale, barren hills that surround the city. The sky is overcast and moody, and we feel hemmed in, trapped. A cop tells us to get a move on, and the three of us get in my brother's car and follow the police diversion signs to the motorway. Almost immediately we run into an impromptu blockade. A dozen heavyset men in gray suits are standing across the road. A few wear orange sashes with their lodge number on them. Others are carrying ceremonial banners or pikestaffs. One man has a sword out, which he brandishes theatrically. The men are angry, and their faces are red from too much drink. A couple are wearing masks to disguise their identity. They tell us that the motorway is closed and direct us to the Shore Road.

We thank them politely and turn the car away from the blockade.

"Get that piece of Jap shite out here," one of the masked men shouts, commenting presumably on my brother's Hyundai.

About two hundred yards along the road we see the turnoff for the Shore Road blocked with burning



raw and a few hay bales. We consider driving through, but there are groups of kids waiting with stones and bottles for anyone foolish enough to try.

The kids are very young, barely in their teens; they have crew cuts and baby faces and temporary tattoos. One is wearing a FRIENDS T-shirt and another a baseball cap with the logo DISNEY. They seem like my nephews and nieces back in Carrick. In Belfast you are forced to choose your tribe and show your loyalty at an early age. We all stare at one another for a few moments through the glare-streaked windshield. They stand in stark silhouette against the bright orange and yellow flames. Gareth puts the car in reverse and we turn around.

Behind us the kids give an mighty cheer.

We drive into the city center. It's the only way left to go. The shops are shuttered and the pubs are closing early. We encounter a few other wildered motorists. Like us, they have no concrete information, only rumors: bonfires have been lit, a man has been shot in west Belfast, the motorway is open near the city zoo, there are burning vehicles on the northern roads. A group of tourists in a VW asks us if the road to the port is still open. We don't know and shake our heads. They drive off in the wrong direction, come back and ask us the same question again.

It's dark now and raining, and the hum of helicopters is the only sound in the silent city. I try to get news off the radio, but for some reason all we can get is an opera being broadcast in German on BBC Radio 3. The staid smell of tire smoke fills the air. We come upon a group of Orangemen who have lit a brazier on the road. They are drunk and singing hymn songs about the Pope, the Kennedys, and the Virgin Mary. They have loosened the ties of their tuxedo suits, and despite the rain, a man with a pikestaff is having a lie-down in the fast lane.

A red-nosed man points for Gareth to wind his window down and have a word with him.

"How you doin' there, mate," Gareth says to the man.

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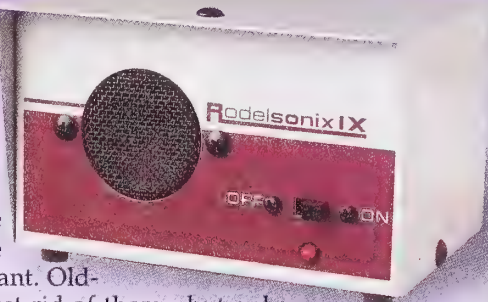
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"Road's closed," the man says.

"Aye, I know, mate," Gareth says. "Was just trying to get back to Carrickfergus."

"You boys from Carrick then?" the man says skeptically.

"Oh aye, Carrick, the castle and all that," I say anxiously.

"And her?" the man says, glancing at Leah and giving me what looks like the evil eye, though it could just be the plastered one.

"Born and bred," I say. Then I tell him that we're from Victoria, a tough working-class Protestant neighborhood. The man clears his throat and spits.

"Aye well, you might be able to get home, if you follow the road back up to the Falls," the man says and walks back to his cohorts around the brazier. Gareth looks at me. Of course, the Falls Road. This is the main Catholic ghetto in Belfast, and since the Protestants are out marching all over town, the Falls should be relatively quiet. If we can get there, then we should be able to escape the city. Before we can turn the car around, a man with a scarf over his face stops us. Gareth winds the window down again.

"If you're from Carrick, what were you bloody doing in Belfast at this time of night?" he asks belligerently. I wonder what he's getting at. Does he think we're lying? That we're really undercover cops or something? I get a cold feeling in my stomach.

"We were at the pictures," Gareth says quickly.

"Oh aye. What you see?" the man says, pulling the scarf up so high that only his eyes are visible.

"Mission: Impossible," Gareth says.

"Oh aye? That's a bloody good picture," he says, and after we chat a bit about the movie, the explosions and other special effects—particularly the famous helicopter-in-the-tunnel scene—he seems satisfied and slips back into the shadows. We accelerate the car slowly, negotiating the maze of slick roads that lead up to the Falls. It's safe here. There are no Orangemen or soldiers. We drive by a mural depicting the 1981 Hunger Strikers, past the Sinn Féin advice center, past a painting of a weeping Mother Ireland, past a police station so heavily

armored that it would take an air strike to get at the cops inside. The rain worsens and full night comes. Finally the road bends and curves into the quiet countryside of the surrounding hills, leaving, to the rear, a magnificent view of the charged, electric city: the docks, the ghettos, the bomb sites, and the cheering around primordial fires; the great shelter of civilization coughed up by the river and sinking slowly into the mudflats of the black lough. We're high above it all on Divis Mountain, and as Gareth drives, Belfast slips away behind, in all of its garish light and madness. But, like prudent I.

the three of us are too cautious to turn and look.

After a day of leisurely recovery, we venture out again, this time in search of more peaceful attractions. It doesn't take us long to find the sign: KNIGHT RIDE: THIS WAY FOR FUN FUN. It turns out to be another of the council's heroic attempts to revive the area's economy. They've bumped up taxes again and then persuaded the European Community to give them a few million pounds to build an indoor, interactive history tour of the local area. It was sold as a high-tech, high-concept scenario: Carrickfergus's answer to Disney's famed Epcot Center.

The sign points across a ceme- courtyard and toward a glass-fronted building that resembles the primitive shopping malls built in the early days of the Carter Administration. A twisted mass of was metal at the entrance turns out on closer inspection to be a representation of a medieval knight in some kind of confrontation with an unseen enemy. He appears to be having a seizure.

The storm has just come off the lough, and the rain drives us inside. We pass through the glass doors and into an enclosed shopping arcade made up entirely of souvenir stands and "Irish Products" shops. Ulster Prods do not generally go in for leather chaun kitsch, seeing it as part of the Kulturkampf from south of the border, but here, in anticipation of big-spending American coach parties, the place is packed with kitsch.



I'M IRISH hats, moonshine-  
iskey recipes, books of Irish say-  
s, and potted geographies of the  
erald Isle. A book entitled *How  
Irish Saved Civilization*, which  
ks suspiciously like a serious his-  
y book, turns out to be almost  
irely fictional, though of the  
d that sentimental Irish Ameri-  
as love. The building is quite  
ge, and there are perhaps twenty  
ople running the various stalls.  
e are the only customers in the  
ole place, and judging from the  
prised reactions to our appear-  
e, it appears that we're the only  
itors they've seen all day. Leah  
ys an OIRISH AND PROUD OF IT  
g, and I select a tea towel with a  
ltic cross on one side and a  
ipe for soda bread (in rhyme) on  
e obverse.

Outside one of the shops there is a  
-size cutout of Michael Flatley, the  
-proclaimed "Lord of the Dance."  
ely is dressed like some sort of  
ie and has a gold braid around his  
head. He is chubby and sweating,  
d there is a quote from a newspaper  
derneath his leaping clogs that  
ds: "The distillation of 2,000 years  
Celtic Culture." It is, therefore,  
h a sinking feeling that we head  
the broken escalator to the second  
or of the structure and the actual  
ight Ride itself.

The concept of the ride suggests  
ne potential for success. Carrick  
es have a lot of history: it's been  
acked by the Scots, the English,  
Irish, the French, the Germans,  
d even by the American Captain  
n Paul Jones during the War of  
pendence. There have been  
re than enough sieges, hangings,  
ts, disasters, plagues, religious  
rs, and other notable incidents  
keep the average tourist mind  
upied. Alas, the concept's exe-  
ion leaves something to be ded-  
ed. Presumably, most knights  
veled about on horseback. In the  
ight Ride, however, one must  
mb into a large facsimile of a  
ight's *helmet*, wherein one travels  
ough time, taking in the thou-  
ad-year history of Carrickfergus.  
n the way one is treated to the  
hts, sounds, and smells of a me-  
val town, in a trip that's sup-

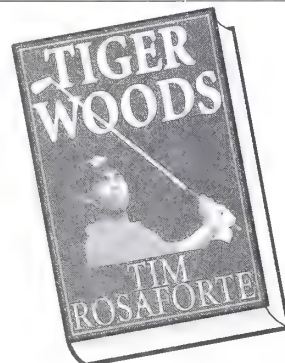
posed to be something like an edu-  
cational version of the Pirates of  
the Caribbean.

After buying our tickets, we sit in  
the helmet-shaped car and try to  
figure out whether the pervasive,  
acid smell signifies only a harmless  
shorting out of wires or a massive  
electrical fire. The clerk gives us a  
cheery thumbs-up, and the car jolts  
forward through a set of double  
doors and into the darkness. For a  
moment it's like the ghost-train ride  
of a traveling carnival, with eerie  
lights and sharp turns on the rails  
and the odd unsettling image that  
blurs past you. A tinny narration  
begins, though we can't be sure of  
its purpose since it has the clarity of  
an announcement on a New York  
City subway platform. We pass by a  
waxwork of a man who seems to be  
an important figure, since he's wear-  
ing a crown and wielding a large pa-  
pier-mâché sword. Dressed in loose-  
fitting finery and with a skin texture  
that's about as lifelike as a man-  
nequin from the Gap, he is anima-  
tronically powered to move and  
speak as the car goes by, but what  
he says is incomprehensible to actual  
human beings.

As the knight's helmet shudders  
along through the Dark Ages and in-  
to the Renaissance, I think I recog-  
nize the figure of King John of Robin  
Hood fame, and soon we come to a  
scene of traditional Irish discipline: a  
man stands, hunched over and con-  
fined in the stocks, howling hysteri-  
cally from some vague medieval tor-  
ture technique that the ride's  
designers have mercifully left to the  
visitor's imagination. Immediately  
there follows a witch trial and a spec-  
tral decapitated head that laughs at  
us from its perch on the wall. Next  
comes a battle scene with a host of  
gruesome injuries, the bearers of  
which are strangely ill-proportioned,  
with arms reaching down to their  
knees and rectangular feet and torsos  
too skinny to support their mis-  
shapen plastic heads. It's as if they  
were constructed by alien anthropol-  
ogists who derived their concept of  
the human form from a few bones be-  
longing to disparate skeletons found  
scattered about in the strata of a  
desert ravine. The remaining dis-

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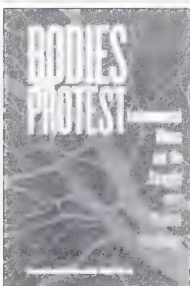
I'm in Turkey, teaching in Ankara. I love it. I arrived two weeks ago in Istanbul, a beautiful but large city. I met an American who teaches in Ankara and encouraged me to check it out. The day after I got there I had an interview, and the day after, I got a job! I'll be working at a privately owned English school, supposedly the best in Ankara (but they all say that)! There are 20 teachers at the school, mostly British and they desperately want Americans to even it out a bit.

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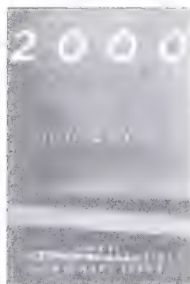
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plays, of indeterminate historical significance and accuracy, are supposed to move and communicate but seem to stop halfway, as if depression or ennui had suddenly set in.

It's hard to breathe, and I wonder if this is supposed to convey the claustrophobic atmosphere of a medieval castle town. As we gasp for breath, the car turns and we find ourselves on the cusp of modernity: the year is 1690, when King Billy lands in the harbor. For the Prod planners of the Knight Ride the rest of Irish history was only an appetizer. For them the moment that the Prince of Orange set foot on Irish soil was the great climax of an epoch in Irish history. Crowds are cheering, and the knight car starts to vibrate. We see William's fleet docking in a model of the harbor.

The man himself is a raffish Ubermensch towering over the lesser mortals around him. The car screeches slowly along, and the smell of burnt toast rises up from the tracks. Leah seems to be losing consciousness. The cheering reaches a crescendo, and suddenly the narration kicks back in. It is solemnly delivered by the fine Irish actor James Ellis, who informs us that King Billy came to Ulster to save Christendom from the papists. In a voice trembling with emotion he explains what an honor it was that William chose to land his forces in Carrick. Once we've made it past William of Orange, the next three hundred years of the town's history are speedily dispatched in under a minute. And after we cruise through all fifteen seconds of the twentieth century, just as we seem to be approaching the end, the helmet bursts forth from the dark tunnel and swings us out into the harsh striplights thirty feet up over the empty arcade. For a moment we sway high above the passionless stores and the sad-faced shopgirls, rotating in the rickety fiberglass helmet and imagining ourselves plunging to an ironic death in a stand full of Guinness merchandise.

When we finally escape the Knight Ride, the sky is black and lightning is forking up above the

Antrim plateau. It's pouring even harder now. Leah and I are freezing and try to catch a train, but because of the Orangemen's civil disobedience none of the trains are running. We buy some Cadbury chocolate instead and walk home along Prince William Way (which was formerly Kennedy Drive, but having a main road named after a Catholic president had finally proved too much for the local council, and the name was changed to honor the second heir to the throne). The rain and the wind have by this time ripped our umbrellas to pieces. We're hoping that someone who knows the area will stop and give us a lift, but no one does. I point out the place where I used to play as a child: the tree where I hid playing hide-and-seek, the field where we played soccer, the river where I used to fly boats, and the bramble lane where we picked blackberries.

We arrive home thoroughly drenched. My mother makes us Ulster fry for tea, and we watch the news on television. There are riots in Drumcree. A taxi driver has been shot just outside Belfast. The Irish prime minister has phoned the British prime minister. The British prime minister has been in touch with the White House. Even the Pope has had something to say. The former American senator George Mitchell looks frustrated that all this hard work to bring peace to the natives has gone unappreciated.

It may be that the thugs who are the paramilitary groups on both sides will eventually succumb to the eluctable logic of the postmodern theme-park economy, thus letting the Knight Ride carry them into the future filled with the seemingly infinite varieties of Irish sentimentality. If so, perhaps American tourists will then make Belfast their first stop on a grand tour of the former sites of ancient ethnic conflict. Yes, it may be that Ulster, like Forty-second Street, will one day be safe for Disney, but I fear that too many of my countrymen will find themselves unable to shed their three-centuries-old tradition of hatred and violence. In Northern Ireland, that hatred is really all we have left.

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# THE LAKE

By Anthony Giardina



**M**y name is Danny Sienkewicz. I am a firefighter in Denniston, Massachusetts, a town with just over 15,000 inhabitants and little to speak of in the way of a commercial district. Needless to say, we don't fight a lot of fires here. Since no major highway

runs through our town, neither will you find us called more than four or five times a week to assist at an emergency.

Recently, however, we had a tragedy at the station. But right away, having said that, I want to back off from it. When I hear the word "tragedy" spoken, I can't help it, my mind goes directly back to the image of Mrs. Carney, my teacher in junior-high English at Denniston High. Mrs. Carney said death didn't count as a tragedy unless the person who died might have achieved greatness. And that sunk in for me, I remembered. So let me say instead that we had a sad-

ness not long ago at the station. The wife of one of the firefighters died. He killed her, accidentally. Timmy McCandles. The men, though, all insist on referring to it as a tragedy, and I never contradict them. Although I know more than any of them what actually happened, I maintain my silence and allow them to use whatever words they want.

I am a married man. I did not go to college. My father was not a firefighter. Instead he was one of those men who fought in Korea and came home and begot children and drank too much and ended up in the Old Soldiers' Home, dying of a rotting liver and wasted lungs, both at the same time; the race was to see which would get him first. I think it was the lungs, but then

I stopped paying attention at a certain point. I have this image of myself in high school, around the time of my father's death. I am sitting in a classroom full of thugs, and girls ready at a second's notice to get pregnant by them, and then those few who

are taking notes and preparing for college. I am not going crazy with hormones or thinking about sleeping with these girls or about going to college either, though I suppose I could have, I was told I had the aptitude. I am instead fixed on a point outside the room. The life I am going to live has become clear to me; I have fashioned it, though I am only seventeen at the time. I will have a wife and children, three or four of them. I will have a certain house, with trimmed hedges, and on Saturdays you will see me out there, like all the other men, in a T-shirt and scuffed, faintly dirty khakis, trimming and pruning. I envisioned things with an orderliness I imagined my father could never so much as approximate from his chair at the Old Soldiers' Home. I

Anthony Giardina's collection of stories, *The Country of Marriage*, will be published in January by Random House.



saw myself all grown up, packing the children in the car and going on picnics. And I knew, even then, how I would look in that car, my eyes staring straight ahead at all times, never quite fixing on what's on either side of me.

**Y**ou have to admire me for this, I achieved my goal. When I was done with Cadet School, I began looking at girls, and not until then, at least not with any seriousness. I went on living with my mother after Cadet School, my two older sisters were married, the opportunities were not great. I loved my life in those days, my rituals, swimming at the Y every night, but it was hard to meet girls. So here is an embarrassment. Sharon, my wife, lived two doors down the street; I'd known her since childhood. What I knew about her at that time was that she'd become a nurse and gotten engaged, but something went wrong, the galoot she was going to marry got in a motorcycle accident, lost some vital function. Sharon held on for a while, but it was no good. In the neighborhood, we knew such stories of loyalty and hard luck. Watching Sharon go in and out of the house in her white sneakers and hose, I felt a pity in my heart, and in my imagination began to place her inside the picture I'd formed in high school: the trimmed shrubs, the packed car. I started going over to her house, I found excuses. I don't remember love, but that did not seem important then. When we first slept together, I thought this woman exuded milk, it was like being an infant again, and the sensation I had was of dipping myself in an enormous, brimming bowl. She was, at the beginning, one who was prone to cry after lovemaking, and I did not ask, but assumed, this was grief over the lost motorcyclist. Holding this crying woman in my arms in the back seat of my car, I felt that something quite natural was going on, a transference: if I held her and said nothing for a long enough time, she would stop loving him and start loving me—or she would, at the very least, and good enough, *accept* me—and for a long time that is what I believed happened.

Our girls are three and four.

We've rested now, but next year we'll have a boy. I know this as certainly as I once knew I would reach this life of mine. We have boys' names picked out. Duncan or Griffin or maybe just Joe. I joke with Sharon about this, how the classrooms in four or five years aren't going to have any normal names left. "Let's do our part," I joke to Sharon. "Let's people the world with Joes." She laughs and goes along with me, but then she gets that look that tells me she'd be fine stopping here, with just the girls. It's a snag we've hit, Sharon and I, and although I don't believe this is an obstruction that will last forever, I would be a fool not to admit that Lisa's death put it there.

Timmy, Lisa's husband, has been my best friend since high school, when he shone at baseball and I failed to distinguish myself in the hundred-yard dash. I knew Timmy's flaws early, though I forgave him them. Or maybe it's truer to say that I never considered them as being separate from him. He was always more handsome than me and less capable of sustained effort, more prone to sullenness and moods, which around here, given his Irishness, always meant that he would drink hard. Lisa chose him when he was at his peak, when he still had his fastball, his redheaded good looks, and a breezy, young man's confidence that could knock you over. It soon became their joke, at the high school cafeteria table, to confide in the rest of us just enough of the details of their passion to drive us all crazy. "Was it cookies or cake this weekend?" someone would ask them at Monday lunch, "cookies" and "cake" being, of course, code words for the two basic things teenagers knew to do then. Lisa wore a flushed look in those days, her maturity starting up in her, and she had a way of looking across the table at Timmy, as if knowing even then that he was going to fuck up, going to be her burden in the years to come, but that this had been her training, to find some flawed man and carry him.

As for me, I sat and studied them as if they were light-years away from me, as if what they had together was

possible only for certain rare species and even for them would always touch and go. The bulk of my attention—certainly my attention—that time was reserved for Timmy's father. He was the fire chief. I knew how to drink in moderation and had a passion for watering the lawn. I stood and watched him every chance I got, because in the look of his resting old man's face as he moved about his yard in the summer dusk, in his careful and methodical manner with the hose, I felt as close to a form of teaching as I have ever received from any man. I think I was aware of this, too, and allowed me to see on those nights the confidence that kept him steady in those days: the purest part of life, the aching, gorgeous center, was a thread deeply mired in the past. It was useless to try and seize that sweetness because it was already, at the moment he and I were born, played out. But distillations of it, of the life so lucky bastard had once gotten to live, came down from the air sometimes, onto lawns, into backyards, certain kinds of light, and you could go as far as a man must be to posit that you landed on you.

**T**he decision to become a firefighter occurred on one of the nights when I sat alone in a lawn chair in the McCandleses' back yard. Timmy had stepped inside to get each a soft drink, and his father had gone deep into his yard. The Chief was standing under an apple tree looking up into it. He was muttering something at the time, and it had a sullen and half-angry tone to it. The yard was narrow but long. The Chief seemed to have planted everything there: apple and peach trees, a grape arbor. It was May, and the air was that thick. Chief McCandles looked in my direction and I'm sure did not see me. The sound of his muttering might have reached someone else in a different way, might have sounded like an unhappiness any boy would want to run from. His life, I knew, was imperfect. Still, it seemed to me then as desirable as anything a young man being should aspire to. I would go one step further and say that what



nderstood, at that moment, was  
t human beings shouldn't desire  
fection but only to take their nec-  
ary woes into arbors, into sweet-  
elling man-made enclosures. So  
re it was: Timmy came out with  
drinks, and I had made what was  
be the major decision of my life.

t took me four years, though, to  
e up for what Timmy got upon  
duation: the six months' freedom  
go off and study hose hydraulics  
I qualify as an EMT. In those four  
rs, I stood as Timmy's best man, I  
d his baby daughter, Erin, at the  
t while the priest poured holy  
er on her head. I even became  
n's baby-sitter in a pinch, and  
med how to change a diaper and  
d an infant high on your shoul-  
so her stomach settles. Often, on  
se nights when I was usually so  
d I fell asleep before they came  
me, I would be awakened by  
a's hand on my shoulder, where  
re might be a spit-up stain left by  
n, and I can still recall that first  
ary vision of Lisa above me as I  
ne into wakefulness, a woman  
o had recently grown tired, say-  
ing, "Wake up, Danny," very gently,  
le behind her Timmy stood, hav-  
drunk a little too much on their  
e and ready now to give me the  
ot so that he could get Lisa into  
bedroom. Lisa's hand, mean-  
le, rested on my wet shoulder a  
le longer than it strictly needed  
and I believe a sympathy started  
between us then.

suppose I became less available to  
m as time went on. I finally saved  
enough so that my mother would  
all right while I went off to Cadet  
ool, then found myself inserted,  
stealth, by the complex network  
ollegiances that extend over two  
nties here, into a neighboring  
s ladder company. "We'll wait for  
omething to turn up in Denniston,"  
rief McCandles winked. I could  
t. Most nights found me waist  
p in the YMCA pool, surveying  
room for the girl I would marry.  
ere were nights when Timmy in-  
ed on accompanying me, just to  
out of the house, I think. He  
uld stand beside me in the water,  
ng off signs of envy at my bache-  
state, assuming, when I looked at

women, that he knew what was on  
my mind. But Timmy by then no  
longer received my intimacies—we'd  
grown past all that—so he couldn't  
know how, when women walked  
through the door of the Y, tucking  
their hair into caps, wet from their  
pre-swim showers, it wasn't sexual  
availability I sought but something  
more specific, a quality I was later to  
find in Sharon, my wife. There was a  
certain walk, a manner of tucking  
the hair, a composure, and a sense of  
banked hopes that were for me, in  
those days, the very composition of  
desire. After our swims and showers,  
when we sat together in the bar, I  
didn't mention any of this to Timmy.  
Instead I listened, allowing Timmy's  
life to be the important one. It was  
no different from what I'd always  
done. By then a string of complaints  
had started to flow from him, all that  
Lisa wasn't. I sat and waited for the  
moment when he would tell me he  
didn't love her anymore, at which  
point I would rise and, in my mind's  
eye anyway, punch him in the face.

I drove him home on those nights,  
and I always waited at the foot of  
their driveway until he made it to  
the door. More often than not, Lisa  
would come outside before he got  
there, like she'd been looking out for  
him. There was physical contact be-  
tween them, though of an uninter-  
pretable sort: Timmy, who had so re-  
cently complained of her coldness,  
always reached out for her with a  
kind of loping, heartsick movement;  
she reached back, and the words he  
had spoken to me in the bar had this  
immediate tendency to fade. Some-  
body tells you his story, that's not his  
story, I always thought, watching  
them. Hers was a vaguer touch than  
his, certainly, but they were always  
together when I drove off, together  
in a way that seemed theirs alone,  
keeping the same sort of secret  
they'd kept at the cafeteria table.  
Was it going to be cookies tonight or  
cake? Driving away from them, I  
found myself doing something I very  
rarely did—that is, looking at both  
sides of the road, into the thick  
woods surrounding their house, as if  
something lay in waiting there for  
me to discover, something I both  
wished for and feared.

Such feelings, however, had usu-  
ally dissipated by morning. They  
did not, in any case, cause me to re-  
lax my vigilance. I found and mar-  
ried Sharon, and nine months and  
four days later we had the first of  
our baby girls. After the first was  
born, we waited three months and  
conceived the second, all according  
to a plan that existed in my head  
and that Sharon, in her pliant and  
docile manner, never once  
raised her voice against.

**J**ust a few months after Sharon  
got pregnant for the second time,  
Lisa found herself pregnant, too. It  
was too much of a coincidence for  
me to believe Timmy wasn't being  
competitive. Concerned that I was  
getting too far ahead of him, he  
might have punched holes in the  
condoms; I wouldn't put that past  
him. What was Lisa to him anyway  
in those days? They'd gotten to act-  
ing surly in each other's company.  
Lisa had finally finished her degree  
in physical therapy and had gone  
back to work. She wanted to wait a  
couple more years before having a  
kid or maybe—who knows?—stop  
at Erin, and Timmy wasn't fond of  
that idea at all. So within three  
months of each other, Sharon gave  
birth to our second daughter, Erica,  
and Lisa had Pete.

When Erica was a year old, I put up  
a swing set in the yard. Here we work  
three days on, three days off, so there  
were a lot of days when I was home,  
and being home that much I began to  
notice that the baby was crying a lot.  
Annoyed, I'd go inside the house to  
check on things and find Sharon in  
bed, while Maryann, our elder daugh-  
ter, sat in front of the TV and the ba-  
by stood screaming in her crib. "What  
is it?" I'd ask Sharon, and she'd just  
look at me from the bed, drawn and  
pale, as if she wished I knew enough  
not to ask such a question. I'd go and  
get the baby and try to soothe her,  
and bring her to Sharon. Sharon  
would take her from me, all right, but  
a part of her just wasn't there.

It was Lisa who finally had to tell  
me. "She's depressed, Danny." I  
hated that word, it was a word I  
wanted to dance away from; people  
in the paper, it seemed, were always



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committing suicide after being "treated for depression." Lisa sat there, patient, waiting for me to come back. She told me later that my head did a thing, the sort of motion a dog makes when he knows he's about to be punished. "It happens," she said, with some gentleness I was grateful for.

It certainly hadn't happened to Lisa. She'd joined a gym after Pete was born and taken off all the creamy, pleasing weight her body had taken on during two pregnancies. I guess it wasn't pleasing to her. She talked a lot about going back to work as soon as Pete was old enough, and she was filled with a crazy kind of energy that, in my insomnia-bred state, sometimes felt vaguely annoying.

I couldn't sleep beside Sharon anymore: the fact of her going away distressed me too deeply. But I hadn't the beginning of an idea what to do about it. I'd thought making love a lot would be a way of rousing Sharon, bringing her back from the dead, but it only succeeded in making her go farther away. She'd stopped responding to me, or else she'd respond too late, in a way that let me know she was pretending. Then she'd fall asleep right afterward, as if the fakeness of it didn't bother her one bit.

For a while, Sharon's mother helped out with child care, but she did it grumpily. So it was a problem. And then one day Lisa said, "Let me take the baby. I'm home anyway, with Pete. It's no problem. Let's let Sharon get some rest."

Sharon never objected to this. She may have only pulled the covers closer to her chin when I proposed it and retreated into those dreams of hers. I agreed, because I didn't know what else to do. I put Maryann in day care and drove Erica to Lisa's every day that I didn't have to go on shift. And on the days when I did, Lisa came and picked up Erica herself.

The way things worked out, it never seemed too much of an intrusion on Lisa's time. She was always full of that manic energy on those days when I came to drop Erica off. It was like she was fueled by a force toward something, though what that

could be, in the house, in the bathroom, in the little toy room, in the smelling rooms, in our little toy room, was out of my power to guess. She was frequently on the phone and motioned that I should put Erica down and just go, she could handle things. But I didn't feel right about that. Sometimes I brought Erica to the living room, where Pete was on the floor, messing with his teeth, rings or trying to grab their scruff, cat, and the two of them would play so well together I'd lie down on the couch and catch up on my sleep right there.

Often I'd wake up an hour later and find Lisa and the babies sitting at the dining-room table, having a snack and laughing at me. "You snore something awful, Danny," I would say. I wasn't embarrassed; she'd caught me sleeping too many times in my life. She was like my sister, and though we'd had a complicated physical relationship since high school, I retained, looking at her, some old sense of having taken her apart together as children, a shared innocence that could not be breached. She was not quite a man in Lisa's presence, but someone on the way to coming one. If it was early enough when I woke and neither of us had to race to pick up our older kids from day care and hers from kindergarten, I'd offer to watch the babies and let her get in an extra hour at the gym. She always took up on it, too, and sometimes, when things were going especially well in this new arrangement of ours, I'd come ambitious and told Lisa I could get out more if she wanted. I even told her if she needed to go back to work a couple of times a week, I thought I could handle it. I could watch the babies on the days it wasn't working.

"You want to be my husband, Danny?" she said when I offered this to her, and it had a light, ridiculous sound to it that was actually a relief to me. I was aware that I might be trying to step into Timmy's shoes—not as lover, never that—but as he should have worn them, taking responsibility for what she might need. And I was careful about it. I stayed with Lisa only on the days when he was on shift. If he had



ned to be home, I never intruded, t dropped Erica off and skedad- dled, let them have what- ever they still had together.

One afternoon Lisa and I were nding in the kitchen. Pete had t thrown up all over himself, and was worried he was sick. She had , overblown worries about Pete, ways. She'd taken off his clothes d begun to soak them in the sink. ere were already dirty dishes there; as holding Pete and she was trying soak his clothes without moving e dishes, and her movements med to me not properly thought , even stupid. I handed her Pete I got out a basin and filled it and ked the clothes, and then, very ud of myself, said, "There," and ked up at her. I caught something n, though I didn't at first want to; reaction was to look back at the king clothes and maybe rearrange m. When I turned back to her, it s still there, though now covered ne—it would have to have been— cause such intensity can't just g out there, it would scorch or get ched. But it made things uncom- able for about ten minutes. Real- we'd just made love. It doesn't al- s happen in beds, or in cars, the y people think it does, with thes off, with organs and hands. It pends sometimes in rooms, while x man has his hands in a tub of ping baby clothes and the woman olding a naked infant. A thing ses, very strong, the very thing t gets you into bed, and the other ches it, registers, and things be- en two people are forever nged. There was no chance, ough, that Lisa and I were going to away from each other after that. ybe we didn't know enough to be red. Instead I took Pete and she hed her hands and went and did ething else, not even in another m, right there in the kitchen; ybe wet a washcloth to cool down e's body. I had him in my arms I could feel how hot he was, how and unhappy. We went ahead did our chores, just like it was day. and it was any day, or could have n, when it finally happened, a

day when both Erica and Pete took their naps at the same time, and without either of us saying anything about it, we went into the bedroom and fucked. I say "fucked" because I don't know any other word for it, because I closed off my mind, drew a curtain over it, from the moment I took her hand and led her in. Otherwise, I don't know how I could have done it, let go of caution that way.

I don't have any memories of those times, at least not of the first six months. I couldn't describe them to you now. Maybe that's true of all sex that matters: you try to dive back to the thing, the touch or the lick, that incited feeling in you, and you realize it came from somewhere else: I was aware, from the start, of two things: of everything about it being wrong, and everything about it mattering, in a way I had not known such things could matter before. I didn't like this, but I followed it. I split my life in two. In the station, I made my little jokes and laughed at the jokes of others. I did the shopping and tended to the house and went on making love to Sharon in a dim, hopeful way, and in all of these acts was a certain kind of conviction as well. I think that during all this time my hopes for Sharon's return went unabated, as though that could fix things somehow. Sometimes, only sometimes, picking up a can off a supermarket shelf, I might feel my knees go weak under me for a second and my hands grip the handles of the shopping cart until they were white, and I'd think, at these moments, that a price was about to be exacted. I'd almost welcome this, but it would pass. I'd put the can in the cart, I'd touch my daughter's hair if one of them happened to be seated in the cart, and we'd push on to the next aisle. It would be a day.

The story I told myself, for six months, about our fucking was that Lisa was an unhappy woman and that I might have been anyone. Not anyone. But I might have been any number of men who sat and listened, who seemed gentle, who weren't Timmy.

What assisted this was that we didn't talk much, really, for six

months. She'd scratch my chest afterward, a long, subtle gesture. At the end it was not so subtle; it began to hurt, like she was digging into me. I thought to myself at such moments: if Timmy'd just let her work, this wouldn't be happening. Behind the house, their yard went on and on. Timmy had bought big; his father had helped him. They were half a mile from their nearest neighbor, and Timmy envisioned stables. But he never put in a fence. I'd get up from the bed, put on my shorts—because to stand naked in front of her was still too embarrassing—and look out into that yard, imagining what I'd have put there, thinking: if Timmy just cared about his yard a little more . . . Even when Lisa told me once how she'd started loving me when I'd been so gentle with baby Erin, I didn't hear that, or chose not to hear it, the word "love" stood out too much; it sounded wrong. It was something we never talked about, and so I buried it.

But then one day I was getting up from the bed and she pulled me back down. I thought I was going to hit her, I was in that moment so angry; I could sense some new, complicated demand was on its way to being made, and I was on guard for it. She pulled me down, and I thought what I was being asked to do was make love to her again, which I was ready to do, though angrily. But that wasn't what she wanted. She wanted me to look at her. And when I did, she burst into tears. Her face looked all bunched up and ugly, and it held a message in it, unmistakable.

Because I didn't want to hear or see Lisa's message, I made love to her again, in my habitual way, only she made none of the little sounds that told me: now this, and then this. She was crying, whimpering really, and it took me back to Sharon, those early nights in the car when she, too, would cry, and I'd say to myself: hold on and your life is made. But Lisa's crying had an opposite effect on me. At a certain point, I stopped, I looked at her, I felt the way she was holding me. I heard some voice from far off telling me where I was. It was no surprise. I will not put a name on this moment, or on the knowledge I attained then, ex-



cept to say that after that afternoon the change I had lived with last came about. That is, the conviction with which I had attended to chores, attended to my wife, had left me, and these gestures became empty ones.

**I**t was a blessing during this time that Sharon had ceased to need me. But nobody stays lucky forever. One night we were in the house and I was frolicking with the kids, getting them ready for bed. Sharon, as always, was lying down, and I dipped into the bedroom and made a joke, my good mood spilling over to her, and watched her smile. In some remote, unaffected corner, I wished her well; wished even, out of long habit, for her recovery. Then I went back to the girls. Erica was easy enough to get to sleep, but Maryann required a long story. I sat in the rocking chair and rocked and read her something—"Rikki-Tikki-Tavi," I think—and practically fell asleep myself. Then I tucked her in and went into the bedroom and lay beside Sharon.

The lights were on downstairs, but I was too tired to go down there and shut them off. I thought I'd just go to sleep and leave them blazing. I had only my gym shorts on, as I recall. Suddenly I felt her hand on my chest, a thing I hadn't felt there in a long time. She stroked and stroked, and I tried to read her gesture, tried to see it as a thing in time and space requiring a thoughtful response. She did it so long I almost fell asleep under it, but then she was stroking my belly, and finally her hand went under my shorts. I woke up then. The next thing was, Sharon was climbing on top of me, doubly surprising because that had never been her preferred position. I hoped she had her diaphragm in, because I found in that instant that I no longer wanted Joe. I shut my eyes and listened to her take her pleasure from out of some closed, protected place inside of which I'd locked myself.

After that, whenever I made love to Lisa, certain feelings I'd had inside her body, real but somehow small and ignorable, grew large, as though they wanted very much for

me to see them, as though, too, they knew they were in danger of being lost. There were moments, inside her, when I had the sensation of surfacing on a lake, my skin wet and supple, opening my eyes and surveying a spread of water and a setting of hills I could not recall having actually seen in my life. Maybe I was there in childhood and was only now recalling it, but I didn't think so. In fact, I seemed to know, in some bottled-up part of my brain, just what was happening to me, and what the lake was.

Almost as soon as Sharon recovered, another thing happened. Timmy and I were sitting in the station one day. I'd been moved to Denniston just a few months before, so we shared a shift now and then, not often. I was studying for my promotion exam in *Kirk's Fire Investigation*, had the book open to a certain page, and Timmy came over and ran his finger down the page, made a long smudgy crease in the middle of it. He was standing behind me, rubbing up close against my back, so close that I felt this impulse to shove him away, and while I was experiencing this feeling and looking at the smudge he'd made, I got it. I got what was happening. It was like he knew, too, because he moved away and began talking to somebody else. I watched him, saw the slant of Timmy's body against the light coming in through the firehouse window, and I became afraid. If Timmy could do that simple thing to me, it seemed that there was nothing he couldn't do. I was afraid that if we had to go to a fire he'd find a way of killing me there. I went back to the book. I tried to study the page, but it was no good. The whole story was in front of me now, the way what Lisa and I were doing was wrong, the way my surfacing on the hidden lake was one side of a movie set, on the other side of which Timmy expected to find somebody who was never going to meet him there. I looked at Timmy and tried to love him the way I once had, and though this was difficult, it awakened something in me that I think was glad to be awakened.

Lisa and I had to begin talking then. We had to begin discussing. I insisted on it. We talked first about

Pete, and she told me something she'd never said before: how she had been born out of a wrong guess that she'd stopped loving Timmy the time Pete was conceived and had never learned to love Pete properly. She was afraid he'd die because of it, she'd seen that sign on his forehead all his little life. We stopped talking then for a while; it was sad, too dark. I think we embarrassed ourselves with it. But soon we had to start in again, this time about my knowing and what that meant and each time we had that conversation I'd get out of bed and stalk her room, and always when I did that I'd put something on, but she'd stand in bed, naked and not ashamed to be seen. That was Lisa: she wasn't afraid to see things just as they were; but I always wanted to make them into other, safer things.

Finally, one afternoon, just four months ago, I told Lisa I wouldn't be coming anymore. She bit her lip and said, "I know," but at the same time did not believe me. So I kept coming for another week. I had lost conviction, though, and I pushed away the image of the lake and kept my eyes open and saved the sheets, curtains, the way her face was aging and how hard it would be to love a woman for the rest of this, when the facts were aging her death. When I thought this, the lower half of my heart felt like it had merged in something acidic. I had the vague sense of going against nature and that this was possible choice. "Of course, we could do it," she said once, and I was glad to hear it, to hear her thinking that I was too; it made me believe that the world, the world of the cafeteria table, could be restored.

What I did finally was just to come. Sharon was well enough now and no longer needed the lake, so there was no longer the problem of Erica, who had stopped taking naps anyway. I went ahead and sewed up my life. I thought about conceiving Joe, the process of which had begun in a haphazard fashion. At the station, I even announced once, at lunch, said we might be coming again and that we wanted a dog and Zgrodnik, a twenty-year veter-



d, with his mouth full of egg, "It's  
o wants it most." I raised my eye-  
ws. "What determines the sex. If  
the man wants it more, it's  
always a girl."

One night I happened to be  
me watching television with  
aron when the phone rang. It was  
ning hard, and what I hoped was  
t I wasn't being called in to work  
cause someone had gotten sick  
ad the crew was short. It was Lisa.  
e was crying, or in a state like  
at. Maybe not crying. She was  
ne. Timmy was working. She said  
needed to see me.

I heard that and I listened to the  
n on the roof and wondered, in  
detached way, how long the roof  
s going to last and when we were  
ng to have to go in for the ex-  
se of repairing it. I have this way  
thinking double, when there's  
nothing I don't really want to  
ir, and I put it to use. In the other  
m, I heard the TV, the comedy,  
e laugh track, and waited for  
aron to say, "Who is it?" and  
n, when she didn't, thought of  
sitting there, absorbed in some  
le comedy full of people in bright  
thes and plastic hair, while here  
Lisa, desperate on the other end  
he line, and all I could think was  
v Sharon's world was preferable—  
ching TV, staying in our lives,  
se things were preferable. Lisa  
ded to see that, the whole pitch  
our lives just needed to be adjust-  
that was all, like turning a knob  
l bringing things into a clearer,  
ter focus.

Park away from the house," Lisa  
l. "Please, Danny. On the road."  
Away from the house," she re-  
ted, and I thought that was  
nge.

Why?"  
I think Timmy's got somebody  
ching. Just turn off your lights  
I'll be looking for you."

That sounded calculated, and  
en I put it alongside the hysteria I  
ost didn't go. What could hap-  
e, after all? Sobs, tears, and maybe  
ow job. It had descended to that,  
t's how cold I felt, I didn't want  
ee Lisa anymore. But I went. I  
ieve my excuse to Sharon was

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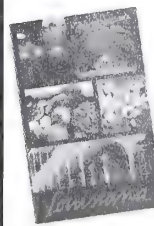
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A	R	B	E	C	U	E	B	E	B	A	U	T
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### NOTES FOR "HEAD-HUNTING III":

Words on the perimeter are all missing the prefix "head" HEADWINDS, HEADQUARTERS, etc.  
Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (\*)

CLUES: ACROSS: 11. bar-be-cue; 12. beau-t; 13. re(G-a)ined; 14. E(uropean)-regate (rev.); 16.  
do-do; 17. Desegregation\*; 21. ma(Dn. 22 \*); 23. sat y(our); 25. h(or)a; 30. (t)iba(l); 31. pun;  
32. a(r)gue; 34. two mngs.; 36. tub(rev.)-biest\*; 37. \*; 38. \*. DOWN: 2. \*; 3. (l)edge(r); 4. \*; 5.  
S.(uire)S.; 6. homonym; 7. pun; 8. \*; 9. D.(ruin)D.S.; 15. O-gee; 18. initials; 19. VI-no.; 20.  
rev.; 24. p(ygm\*)ies; 26. air-a(rev.); 27. \*; 28. hidden; 29. \*; 33. t(h)e-em(rev.); 35. scar(c).

SOLUTION TO AUGUST DOUBLE ACROSTIC (NO. 176). MARK TWAIN: PUDD'N'HEAD  
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that a couple of air packs had been misplaced down at the station and I couldn't direct the men to them on the phone. Something that lame.

When I reached the house, I parked a long way down the road. Maybe she wouldn't find me and I would have my excuse. "I was there, and you didn't find me." I could see the lights in their house through the woods. They were the only lights around. I was sitting in a parked car in the dark, listening to the rain, and wondering if my car would get stuck because theirs was an unpaved road, muddy and deserted. And I have to say this too, because it was a part of the night: I'd begun to feel safe again. I'd begun to feel that things were going to be all right, restored. Lisa was going to be hysterical for a while, and then she was going to be Lisa again. I remember thinking that, and although it was rainy and dark, a kind of warmth started up in me. I sat there and I thought she would probably come, probably find me, we would have some sex but it wouldn't count, we were on the other side of all its weight and importance. I could barely remember the lake. As I thought that, I remember smiling, almost like I was anticipating the sex, and I did this thing, embarrassing to admit, I cupped my balls in my hand and looked down at them, just interested and anticipatory, and at that moment something came into my mind, a little shadow came flying in and perched there, a contradictory shadow that told me the way I was thinking wasn't the way it was. When I looked up, it was like Lisa had risen directly out of this sensation, so that I couldn't force it away but had to stare right into it. If I'd stopped to analyze things, I might have wondered why her face was lit that way, but I didn't ask that, of course. I just saw. And what I saw was Lisa wet and excited, running toward Danny. Toward *Danny*. I had to take that in, maybe for the first time, that I was loved that way, and for a single moment, before I had the chance to stop myself, I was ready to have my life change, and hers too, because of it. I lifted toward that sweet thing there in the car and felt a dark place in me start to open.

And then the whole reason Lisa's face was lit announced itself: it was a car coming.

My first thought was: the car would pass, we'd both go back to what it was we'd been ready for the moment before, the little bit we'd both been preparing to make. This was an intrusion, that's all, a blink, and it'd be over. Except the car didn't pass. Instead it slammed into Lisa—her face knew enough to be frightened for a moment just before—and I saw right away it was Timmy's truck. She had disappeared from my sight, I was looking at the taillights of Timmy's truck and the nozzle of a big gas can leaning on the side. I saw Timmy jump out of the cab, and then I heard the amazing sound of Timmy howling.

That sound was like nothing I'd ever heard before, not like the howl you hear when people think they're going to die. More like the sound of side caves, that sound of essential bedrock loneliness. I didn't stop to think it was strange, the way a howl made everything else take second place. It was like, after hitting her with the truck, the first thing he wanted to offer up—to me, to her—was an intimacy greater than anything he'd offered either of us before: it was how much I feel, you bastards. I'm still here, and I feel *this much*.

It's stupid to say that it made me forgive him, but the thing it did was that I have trouble understanding the way it stood between me and what he had done. For several months, I was outside of any thought of revenge or anger. I was just listening to him.

I did get out of the car finally, went and watched how he was hitting her, and it was like those nights I used to drop him off after drinking. Like it was their lives, after all, and I had no business being in it. I couldn't see that Lisa was dead, but I knew he shouted did he want me to make her call. He just motioned for me to get the hell away, so there was no arguing with him. He did it over and over again, and I knew there was no place for me there anymore.

So I got back into the car, but only on the ride home did I start to think of the realness of it, of Lisa's



dead. I felt ashamed of myself when I realized how long it had taken me to think about this. And there was something else too: while I had been listening to Timmy howl, I had been listening to another thought, one I could barely admit to. I kept putting it away, but though it had been there only for a second, it had lodged in my memory. I might almost call it gratefulness, for what the death meant, what it meant I didn't have to do.

I wasn't going to tell Sharon when I got home. I couldn't imagine speaking of it, or doing anything but lying down and falling into a deep, blank sleep. Sharon was still watching television, though, and I was lucky: only minutes after I got home the call came from the station, saying that Timmy McCandles had accidentally run over his wife, in the rain, outside their house.

So we went to a funeral. We left the little girls with Sharon's mother, and I put on my one black suit and Sharon a dark blue dress, and we sat in the fourth row at Our Lady's. There was all the predictable sobbing and a lot of grim men who were fighters. Friends of Timmy's, friends of the Chief's. In the front row, Erin sat next to her father. Someone had fixed her hair up carefully, in dark barrettes. Timmy had the following: after I'd driven away that night, he'd taken their second car, the Bronco, and parked where my car had been. He told me Lisa had left the car outside and was going to fetch something from it when he'd come upon her, unaware, and slid into her. He just coming home, that was all. He claimed his whole intention was to pick up some spices; he was due to work that night, for the men. Some of the trackings in the mud matched up to that story. Or maybe they hadn't looked hard enough. It had been a rainy night, a summer, and ours is a county with long, old allegiances. So it was a tragic accident, you see.

For me, by this time, Timmy's death had ceased to make the terrible sense it had made that night. By now, I was able to see the calcula-

tion in what Timmy had done, though I would never, ever speak of it. I couldn't see what good it would do anyone, and Timmy, since the night of the accident, had aged to the point where he looked as old as his father. So I knew that some kind of punishment was going on.

As for me, every once in a while I would think of Lisa as she had been in life, and how, because of me, she was dead. There was nowhere to go with that thought—it was just a dark place inside me that I knew I would have to learn to live with. I knew, too, although I couldn't guess yet what effect it would have, that Lisa's death would finally put a mark on me as great as the mark it had put on Timmy.

Last night—it's been three months now, already summer—I went out to take care of the lilacs. The blooms are gone, and I'm just getting the lime in. It's late for that, but I have to do it, and it'll be in for next year. I have three beautiful lilac bushes in my backyard, a dogwood, a mountain ash. I have the yard I always wanted, the yard I dreamed of when I was a boy, and as I dug around the roots of the lilac, I had this moment of remembering. It was a June night, I could hear kids somewhere not far off. I was digging in the earth, and I was aware that the clothes I was wearing, the T-shirt and khakis, the pose and the physical attitude, these were nearly exactly what I'd once envisioned for myself in the old, hopeful, planning days, and I thought in that instant that if I could have gone back and been, at the same time, the boy dreaming this life and the man living it, how happy I'd have been.

What I did, though, is I looked up and saw Sharon staring at me from the porch. The porch loses the light early, and she was standing in shadow. But I caught her face. I tried to smile and she didn't smile back. I'd caught Sharon thinking. It's a way she's started to look lately, a pensiveness that's set in in the months since Lisa died. It was automatic that I looked from her face to her belly and wondered if Joe was in there yet. It was very clear at that

moment—I'm not sure why—that he wasn't. I went back to her face. We stared across a great space at each other, and I wondered what she might be thinking. But it has become Sharon's determination, these last few months, not to let me know. She went deeper into the shadows. I hesitated a moment. I looked around my yard and saw my hand white from the lime, and I thought, very clearly, of the game of my life as being lost. But then I went on, as I do every day, just as if it wasn't. ■

## September Index Sources

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# "Sacrifices for Peace"

## What else does the world expect Israel to do?

There is persistent pressure on Israel to bring "sacrifices for peace." It is understood that these "sacrifices" refer to greater "flexibility" in dealing with the Arabs, but mean primarily that Israel should allow its dismemberment, in order to bring peace to the region.

## What are the facts?

**A Bizarre Concept.** The concept to bring "sacrifices for peace" is a new one that has never before found application in world history. It was created by Arab propaganda to induce Israel to agree to its dismemberment, to give strategic assets to those who are determined to destroy it.

Since its creation in 1948, Israel has been subjected to almost constant Arab terror, to unceasing Arab aggression, and to three major wars. In the Six-Day War, it recovered its heartland of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem; it captured the Golan Heights from Syria, which had been used for decades to shell and spread terror over much of northern Israel; and it conquered Gaza and the Sinai Desert that had been used by Egypt as staging ground and invasion route to Israel.

**Many Sacrifices for Peace.** In order to achieve peace with its neighbors, Israel brought sacrifices for peace that have no precedent in the history of the world. For peace with Egypt, Israel returned the entire Sinai. There is little thanks on the part of Egypt for this generosity and this sacrifice for peace. The controlled Egyptian press spews daily anti-Israel venom. President Mubarak has never visited Jerusalem. It is the coolest possible peace. A sacrifice for peace brought in vain—probably a major act of folly on the part of Israel.

Israel made sacrifices for peace by signing a peace treaty with Jordan. In that

peace, Israel granted Jordan a large yearly allowance of fresh water from its own dwindling and meager resources and accepted a petty demand for "border rectification"—yielding of land. As for Syria, no offered sacrifice for peace seems to be sufficient to satisfy its dictator, President Hafez Assad. He is unwilling to consider even an ice-cold peace, except for Israel's total surrender of the Golan Heights. Fortunately, under the current Israeli government such a surrender is not in the cards.

The greatest sacrifice for peace that Israel has brought was the resuscitation of the bankrupt and moribund PLO terror organization and the acceptance of it "chairman"

Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police."

Yasser Arafat as a negotiating partner. In this ill-advised process, foisted on Israel by world pressure and by its previous government, Israel has made far-reaching and existential sacrifices and concessions. It has yielded control of the Gaza Strip and of all major "West Bank" cities to the Palestinian Authority and has agreed to detailed plans to grant further autonomy to the Palestinians. In what is probably the ultimate folly in this process, Israel has tolerated the formation of a Palestinian "police force" (actually an army) of 40,000 men—the largest police-to-population ratio in the world (!)—and has equipped this "police force" with a complete arsenal of automatic weapons. As the world now knows, these weapons were turned on Israeli soldiers and civilians at the very first opportunity that the Palestinian leaders provoked.

The Arab countries, not Israel, are killing peace in the Middle East. The PLO, apart from the bloody crimes that it has committed against Israel, has now established a virtual dictatorship in the territory allotted to it. In Egypt, thousands of Copts have been killed and their churches burned. President Assad of Syria has occupied Lebanon and has killed and tortured thousands. Iraq, under its dictator Saddam Hussein, is a rogue state attacking its neighbors and killing its own citizens. Saudi Arabia is a monarchical tyranny. Sudan is engaged in the systematic slaughter and enslavement of its black African people. How strange that nobody asks the Palestinians or any of the Arab states to bring any sacrifices for peace. Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police." Billy clubs are good enough for London Bobbies. Why should any more be needed to patrol Nablus, Hebron and Bethlehem?

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## LETTERS

(Continued from page 9)

was nowhere near the riot and nothing to say about it. Apparently the fretting of a middle-class white boy in the suburbs is more important than what went on downtown. One of the key rebellions of the 1960s. Next I suppose we'll have a Civil War memoir written by a fourteen-year-old in Wisconsin.

Cody Ruiz  
Athens, Ohio

## Clarification and Apology

The Readings section of the 1997 issue of *Harper's Magazine* contained an excerpt, "The Life of Guinea Pig," taken from an article "Research Unit Report Cards," which was first published in the August 1996 issue of *Guinea Pig Zero*, a *Journal for Human Pharmaceutical Research Subjects*.

The excerpt in *Harper's Magazine* contained certain statements relating to a clinical trial of the antidepressant Paxil and the antihistamine Seldane by SmithKline Beecham that *Harper's Magazine* has, since publication, learned to be incomplete and/or inaccurate.

The protocol for the trial was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Presbyterian Medical Center, and the data regarding the outcome of the study have been submitted to that board and the FDA and will be published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychopharmacology*. Those data show that there were some reports of transient adverse experiences with one participant withdrawing from the study. In the end, the data show that none of the study participants experienced psychological adverse events as a result of participating in the study. Moreover, contrary to the excerpt, participants in the clinical trial were not paid \$7,000; the participants received up to \$3,250 on completion of the study protocol.

The opinions expressed in the excerpt were those of the author and not of *Harper's Magazine*. We apologize for any misunderstanding the excerpt may have caused.



# DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 177

By Thomas H. Middleton

The diagram, when filled in, will contain a quotation from a published work. The numbered squares in the diagram correspond to the numbered blanks under the WORDS. The WORDS form an acrostic: the first letter of each spells the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken. The letter in the upper right-hand corner of each square indicates the word containing the letter to be entered in that square. Contest rules and the solution to last month's puzzle appear on page 77.

CLUES	WORDS							
A. Gem cut to resemble a beetle	191	124	127	33	94	88		
B. Act of gaining possession	186	128	143	111	189	65	76	
				32	6	56	92	
C. Group, class; confederacy	95	108	91	181	144	152		
D. Marked with spots or blotches	164	25	21	175	193	184	142	
E. "The bad _____, afflict the best!" (Gray, "Hymn to Adversity")	4	54	155	185	149	23	68	35
F. Town, S Rhode Island	116	74	24	157	17	53	22	8
					160	30	80	62
G. Amusement, pleasure	147	167	5	117	31	15	1	99
							139	178
H. In motion, traveling (2 wds.)	140	100	93	90	55	163	115	148
I. Philosopher, very wise person	96	162	50	85				
J. Rope for leading or restraining horses	2	145	171	106	83	112		
K. "Please _____ the pianist" (3 wds.; Wilde, "Personal Impressions of America")	174	97	75	81	86	46	11	63
							28	159
L. Marine sculpin, genus <i>Hemilepidotus</i> (2 wds.)	169	42	51	9	135	104	156	179
								114
M. Instruct, impart knowledge to	101	52	153	120	84	176	166	192
								173

1	G	2	J	3	T		4	E	5	G	6	B	7	Y	8	F	9	L		10	X	11	K	12	P	13	T			
14	O	15	G	16	S		17	F	18	U	19	W	20	T	21	D		22	F		23	E	24	F	25	D	26	Y		
27	S		28	K	29	Y		30	F	31	G	32	B	33	A	34	W	35	E	36	R	37	Z	38	N	39	V	40	U	
41	P	42	L	43	X	44	Q	45	Y	46	K		47	X	48	V	49	W	50	I	51	L	52	M	53	F		54	E	
55	H	56	B	57	P		58	Z	59	S	60	O	61	U		62	F	63	K		64	Z	65	B	66	O	67	T		
68	E	69	U				70	P	71	T	72	S	73	N		74	F	75	K	76	B	77	S	78	Z	79	O		80	F
81	K		82	U	83	J	84	M	85	I	86	K	87	W	88	A	89	T	90	H		91	C	92	B	93	H			
94	A	95	C	96	I	97	K		98	W	99	G	100	H	101	M	102	V	103	N	104	L		105	S	106	J			
107	P	108	C	109	O	110	Y	111	B	112	J	113	V	114	L		115	H	116	F		117	G	118	Y	119	T	120	M	
121	N	122	Q	123	P	124	A		125	Z	126	X	127	A	128	B	129	R		130	O	131	Y	132	V	133	W			
134	V	135	L	136	T	137	Q		138	Q	139	G	140	H	141	R	142	D		143	B	144	C	145	J	146	W	147	G	
148	H		149	E	150	X	151	O	152	C	153	M	154	Y		155	E	156	L	157	F		158	S	159	K	160	F		
	161	U	162	I	163	H		164	D	165	Q	166	M	167	G	168	S	169	L	170	O	171	J		172	T	173	M		
174	K		175	D	176	M	177	V	178	G		179	L	180	S	181	C	182	U	183	R	184	D	185	E	186	B	187	N	
188	P		189	B	190	V	191	A	192	M	193	D	194	Y																

N. Feel a sharp, stinging pain; suffer keenly from hurt feelings	121	73	103	38	187			
O. Without exception	109	79	14	170	66	151		
P. Period of freedom (2 wds.)	41	123	57	188	12	107	70	
Q. Draw	165	122	137	130	44	138	60	
R. Fr. physicist, Nobel Prize 1970	183	36	129	141				
S. Dictatorial, overbearing	158	77	27	180	168	105	72	59
								16
T. Howl, screech	67	136	119	3	71	13	172	20
								89
U. Wordy	82	182	161	18	69	40	61	
V. And so on (2 wds.)	39	190	132	113	134	177	102	48
W. Rushed about in a frenzy (2 wds.)	146	34	49	87	98	19	133	
X. Uncover, denude	10	150	47	43	126			
Y. Labored, marked by exertion	7	194	154	131	115	110	29	26
								45
Z. Quarrel, fight	125	58	37	78	64			

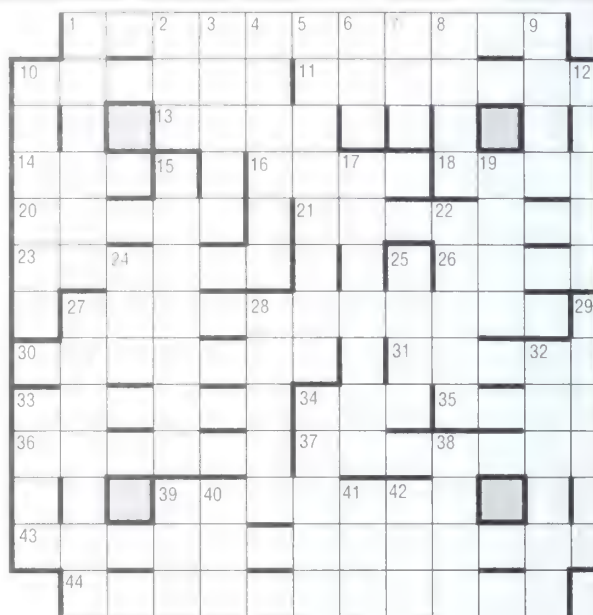


# PUZZLE

## Travel Document

By Richard E. Maltby Jr.

**T**his month's instruction: The bottom is 4 Across. Solvers must discover the 27 Across, indicated in the traditional way, then follow a 44 Across in order to complete the diagram and fill in the four shaded squares. On the way, get bold—for a conclusion you must end up in alone! Clue answers include three proper names and two foreign words. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 77.



### ACROSS

10. Bonds whole she's time match, takes a little time at first (about an hour) (6)
11. In Rome, I, for example, recycle manure left behind (7)
13. Saw, for example, booty that was brought back, . . . (4)
14. . . ship's booty (5)
16. Line of fire? It's well on the way to being evil (4)
18. Stole perhaps from king, in backing father (4)
20. Turn right around, turning in spirit (5)
21. Salts help when eating, starting to really feel bad inside (7)
23. Really counter individual leading Front Line? (6)
26. Rock star in the audience is not working (4)
30. Acted as a moderator when everybody said yes! (7)
31. Make one boundlessly fun item (5)
33. It could be a panel Disney holds in Yiddish—well? (6)
34. Something sucked, yet it's liked (3)
35. Swore it sounds like your sister in Palermo (4)
36. More critical reassessment of curate (6)
37. Threatening to be love-less, without love (7)
39. Falls a second time for returning soldier (7)
43. Fictitious word with no trace a double-blind cover person has to strike a woman (13)

### DOWN

1. Promise, covered in blood (5)
2. Downed a hime (3)
3. Porter carries on without help (5)

4. Slacker frowns from bottom to top (6)
5. I'm vaguely insulted but not put out (8)
6. "Are you Bea?" says the sound buff (3)
7. Bird and this no longer living ape (3)
8. Siamese sound gives me a cry of pain (4)
9. Hemingway is insubstantial writing article (4)
10. Put 42 Down in spasm—that's so sad (6)
12. Slip shows in performing leaps (5)
15. Vigorous six no trump holding; something providing good support (7)
17. Copper keeps one still around—that's elementary! (7)
19. Guns that go the distance? (4)
22. Claims to be situated on an axis (5)
24. Work topless—you'll get smoother (3)
28. Ruffian gets bit of TLC, bit of TLC (4)
27. Miss gets into sulk during clothing designer's opening (7)
29. Special treat: fish (5)
32. With less words you can help write better sermons (6)
32. Talked-up leading character in television revealed as gay (5)
33. To play jazz well sounds like a very big thing (4)
34. Idol comes up on leave—out of sight! (5)
35. Sleep on nothing in river in Ecuador (4)
39. Actress Peebles coming up in one (3)
40. I see, I heard, this place on the Riviera (3)
41. Sandy sound? The first signs of frame-up (3)
44. Shabby article in tabloid (3)

### Contest Rules

Solutions to this puzzle and the previous one should be sent to: *Travel Document*, The New York Times, 606 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10038. If several solutions are received, the first one received in correct order will be the winning solution. Solutions must be received by September 8. Senders of the winning solution will be notified by mail. The winning solution will be published in the *New York Times*. Winners' names will be published in the *New York Times*. The winning solution will be published in the *New York Times*. The winning solution will be published in the *New York Times*.





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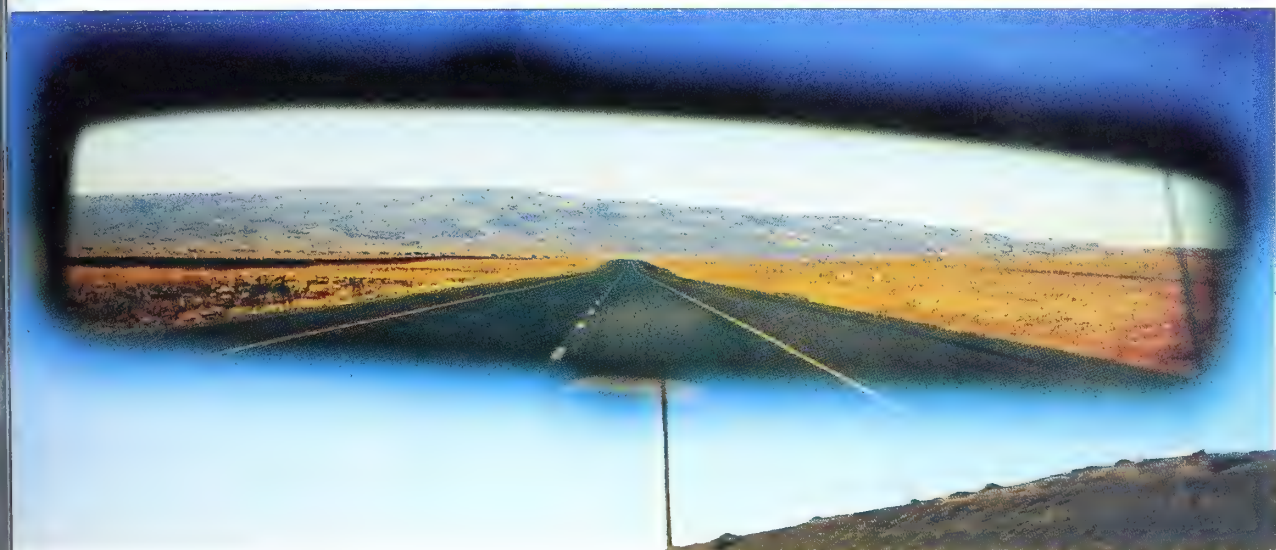


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*By Michael Paterniti*

## MADE MEN OF LETTERS

Our Thing About the Cosa Nostra

*By Albert Mobilio*

## FASCISM À LA MODE

In France, the Far Right Presses for National Purity

*By David Zane Mairowitz*

## FEATHER AND BONE

*A story by Mark Slouka**Also: Michael Chabon and Andy Warhol's Time Capsule*

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*above: I Bear Reaction: An Adaptation of the Eye Transfer of Carolyn Brown*

Left: Robert Rauschenberg, Al and Carolyn Brown performing  
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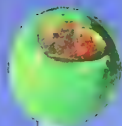
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# HARPER'S

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FOUNDED IN 1850 / VOL. 295, NO. 1769  
OCTOBER 1997

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## LETTERS

### Old Wars, Old Battles

On behalf of the staff of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, we would like to express our deep appreciation to *Harper's Magazine* and Tony Hendra for the magnificent, heartfelt article on our reunion in Spain ["Old Soldiers," July].

Hendra referred to us in his title as "old soldiers," which is certainly accurate; he might also have said "forgotten." It seems that no other American magazine is aware that we exist, but 150 of us are still out here.

Abe Smorodin

Veterans of the

Abraham Lincoln Brigade

New York City

From the very beginning, Tony Hendra shows animosity toward the International Brigades, saying that we "join[ed] ranks one last time." Why "one last time"? Plans are already in place to have another event in 1998, marking the sixtieth anniversary of our departure from Spain.

Hendra mentions his father—a man who didn't go to Spain, whom no one knows, and who is not related to our story at all—seven times. Out of the sixty-eight American veterans who came to Spain, Tony interviewed only my friend Milt Wolff and Nick Pappas, who supposedly said that "the only sincere idealism comes from the very ignorant." We know that Pappas passed away when

he came back to the United States and I guess you can put any word you like into the mouth of a dead man. Pappas was a good Brigadist, a real freedom fighter, and would never have said such nonsense.

Hendra missed the most important part of the Spanish Civil War—the reason for our trip. He could have told *Harper's Magazine's* readers how the Western democracies betrayed the Spanish government, how the democracies had stopped Fascism in Spain, we could have avoided World War II and the loss of those millions of lives. But the democracies didn't have the guts to do it, though, and that is the reason we went to fight in 1936 and to die in 1996.

George Sossenko

French Brigadista

Atlanta, Ga.

A caption accompanying a photograph in Tony Hendra's article perpetuates the myth of Robert Capa's celebrated image "Death of a Loyalist Soldier." The caption tells us "Frederico Borrell García, at center, was killed shortly after this photo was taken. His death was captured by Robert Capa's famous photo of a falling soldier."

Capa's 1936 photograph, which appears to have been taken at the instant that García is fatally shot by a Nationalist bullet, has been a constant source of controversy and debate one of the earliest examples of faked photojournalism. Some critics who have seen the entire roll of film have declared that the "dead" soldier appears alive in later frames. The dramatic photograph might

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been taken during training exercises, capturing a moment when a Spanish soldier simply tripped and fell. What appears to be evidence of a fatal shot to his head could be the tassel on his cap, which is clearly shown in the photograph that *Harper's* published.

Capa never confirmed the accuracy of the imaginative captions that were attached to his photograph by enthusiastic editors in those days of propaganda. It's certainly understandable why Capa would allow the title of his photograph to remain uncorrected. "Death of a Loyalist Soldier," though perhaps a fake, remains one of the greatest of all war photographs.

George Dunbar  
Scarborough, Ont.  
Canada

Tony Hendra's article revisiting veterans of the Spanish Civil War reveals the same dogmatic blindness and political naïveté that affected the foreigners who went into the International Brigades. The war was not a simple matter of the good against the bad, as many Americans believe, but the struggle of one set of evils against another. Atrocities committed by the Nationalists on Franco's side were nearly matched by elements of the Spanish Republic, if not in numbers then in viciousness, injustice, and brutality.

Long ago I spent time in one of Franco's jails. Yet during the war, family members of my friends were taken away after a midnight knock on the door in the Republican zone, where one could be shot after a little ride to the country or even on the street for no more than the suspicion of having consorted with the opposition or having gone to a church, hoarded food, or having played an unauthorized radio. Thousands of civilians were massacred for such "offenses," without trials, their bodies left in fields and ditches and parks.

Why do most Spanish today prefer to hide from the era of the Spanish Civil War? In Hendra's sympathy and personal nostalgia for a lost socialist cause he fails to comprehend the modern Spanish zeitgeist. There is an overwhelming sense of sadness

in many of the older generation feeling that the loss is so ghastly to be unspeakable, and that too much open remembrance often led only to further suffering.

Estanislao Puig Y.  
Colorado Springs, Colo.

## At the Gates of Black Literature

Vince Passaro, in his review of the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* ["Black Letters on a White Page," July], asserts that Henry Louis Gates Jr. is reluctant to say anything "bad" about black writers. He's wrong. Gates has been bad-mouthing certain black male writers since the late Eighties in order to appease disgruntled black feminists such as bell hooks. Gates has criticized both Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison for their misogyny and has said they shouldn't write about feminism. Gates occupies the traditional role of African-American literary commissar, a position appointed by powerful interests located outside the African-American literary community.

Passaro also suggests that no African-American writers criticize Maya Angelou's inaugural poem. A simple search would have discovered my criticisms of the poem printed in the *Washington Post*. But I would be the first to admit that Angelou has written excellent work elsewhere, and for Passaro to refer to her as a "meager form of lawn jockey" is so comical that it's almost racist. It's the kind of slur that Italian Americans have complained about for years.

Passaro also believes that African-American writers submit to "the rules of black culture orthodoxy." This remark reveals a lack of preparation for his assignment. There are scores of African-American scholars who could have done a better job but who languish in obscurity because of the media and the literary establishment's tendency to negotiate with one commissar at a time—who gets replaced as soon as he steps out of line. In fact, among American ethnic groups, African Americans are

*Continued on page 10*



# NOTEBOOK

Ars longa, vita brevis  
By Lewis H. Lapham

20 September 1997  
Little Marsh Farm  
Devon, Pennsylvania

Mr Graydon, I thought we had finished with the subject of you wanting to become a writer when you passed through New York last April en route to your mother's wedding in Venice. You asked for what you called "an uncle's meddling advice," and we spent the better part of an afternoon at a bar on East 10th Street, talking about your chances of commercial or critical success (nil and not to none), about the number of publishers that constitutes the American audience for literature (not enough to fill the seats at Yankee Stadium), about the Q-ratings awarded to authors by the celebrity markets (equivalent to those assigned to trick dogs and red-tailed generals), about the consolations of death (enjoyed posthumously). You didn't disagree with the drift of the conversation, and I thought it was understood that you would apply to business school or pursue the chance of an offer from your friend at Microsoft. Now I'm told that after you graduate from Stanford next spring you intend to work the Alaskan salmon runs for six months and then travel for two months with a Navajo rock band, gathering notes for the great American novel. Your mother and I had dinner last night in Philadelphia, and she presented me with your August manifesto, the one in which you declare California as a "desert of materialism" and declare your release from the prison of "store-bought, prerecorded dreams." I'm not sure that I

can properly describe your mother's mood. Worried and depressed, but at the same time furious—with your stupidity, my complacency, the mediocrity of the restaurant (not up to the standard to which she's become accustomed in Europe), the day of the week, her nail polish, and the rain. Her questions were mostly rhetorical, asked in a tone of voice with which I'm sure you're familiar:

"Doesn't he know what century he's living in, for God's sake? Has he no sense of what things cost? No ambition? No wish to know the important people in the world?"

No matter how often I explained that I'd made more or less the same points when you and I discussed the prospect of your literary career last spring in Greenwich Village, she refused to be comforted.

"Yes," she said, "but you also told him he had talent . . . that his stories showed signs of promise. You're his only uncle, the only male relative he still trusts, the only person he knows who writes books. What did you expect him to think? That your opinion doesn't count? That you were being supportive and polite, like one of those moth-eaten English professors who discover the mark of genius in any student capable of using the word 'ambiguity' twice in the same paragraph?"

I wasn't being polite, Graydon. Both the stories that you published in the Stanford *Chaparral* show a good deal more promise than most of the fiction that appears in *The New Yorker*, but I shouldn't have said so, and I hope that you will forgive my carelessness. You have a talent for literary expression,

but when matched against the trend and spirit of the times it's a superfluous talent—like playing the harpsichord or shooting the Plains buffalo. Amuse yourself with literature when you're older than whoever happens to be president of the United States or rich enough to acquire *The Sewanee Review*. In the meantime, learn to buy hotels.

Before coming to the dessert (a chocolate mousse that your mother pronounced "acceptable") I managed to mollify her with the promise to once again impose upon your patience the wisdom of Polonius. She seemed pleased by my saying that the rock band probably would disintegrate before you boarded the bus in Tucson, but she telephoned the next day from Dulles Airport, reminding me to remind you that she no longer has any appreciable money of her own and that she cannot ask Guelpho to sponsor your literary apprenticeship.

Guelpho apparently hasn't forgiven you for the toast that you proposed at his wedding. ("To my mother's fifth husband, Count Guelpho Faranelli, may he pass and be forgotten with the rest.") Guelpho understands that you were drunk at the time, and it has been explained to him that you intended a complex irony (the jewel of flattery concealed in the glove of insult), but he is not well-versed in the forms of American humor. Neither is he a reader of Flaubert's novels or an admirer of Chekhov's plays. A proud aristocrat, Graydon, who nevertheless yearns to hear you praise his collection of Roman portrait busts and his mastery of the Argentine tango. Antonio Banderas once told him that never in his



life had been so heavy a man so delicately execute the *paseo de la muerte*. The count cherishes the remark.

It's conceivable, of course, that your manifesto was another complex irony meant to frighten your mother (in the way that boys of your age and disposition sometimes threaten to enlist in the marines or marry a rodeo star), and maybe, like Guelpho, I've failed to guess your intention. But in the event that you might mean at least some of what you say, and by way of making good on my promise to your mother, allow me to review the argument.

**T**he existence of a literature presupposes a literate and coherent public that has both the time to read and a need to take seriously the works of the literary imagination. I'm not sure whether the United States ever had such a public; certainly it hasn't had one for the last thirty years. What we have instead is an opening-night crowd, astonished by celebrity and opulent spectacle, tolerating only those authors who present themselves as freaks and wonders and offer the scandal of their lives as proof of their art. Lacking even one critic whose judgment means anything, the management of the nation's literary affairs falls naturally into the hands of accountants and press agents—i.e., life-forms native to “the deserts of materialism.”

Walk into the brightly packaged clutter of the nearest bookstore, and what do you see? Mostly what you would see in *The National Enquirer* or on *Entertainment Tonight*—movie-star gossip, secrets of the pyramids and the stock market, guides to better health, confessions of accomplished swindlers and convicted murderers, beauty tips from notorious madams, the latest bulletins updating the E.T.A. for the end of the world.

If you've been reading the papers, you will have noticed that the publishing business lately has fallen upon hard times. This year's sales for adult trade books (the category you intend to make the canvas of your ambition) have dropped by 12 percent; the bookstores keep new books on their shelves for about the same length of time (five days, maybe two weeks) that grocers

keep light cream and sun-dried tomatoes, and they return unsold books to their points of origin at the rate of 45 percent. Which is why even the most literate publishers (the ones who remember that F. Scott Fitzgerald died of drink) seldom take chances with commodities that fail to meet the standards of tabloid journalism and why their best-selling authors turn out to be the kind of people apt to require the services of a capable bail bondsman. When signing the contracts and arranging the publicity, nobody raises a glass of sherry to the memory of Maxwell Perkins. The more subtle the author's thought and the more careful his argument, the smaller his chance of notice. Not enough people will understand what he's trying to say. The shoddy work sells as well as, or better than, the good work, and why confuse the computers in charge of sales with anything other than “store-bought, prerecorded dreams”?

Even those authors whom you admire and presumably consider serious cannot escape the burden of mechanical repetition. Who among them can afford to take chances with a \$400,000 advance against royalties and the good opinion of the lecture bureaus? Unless they say what they said last time, how can they become reliable products? The transformation of subject into object serves the interest of the market, but it is a bargain that tends to rob writers of their courage.

If you were a young Englishman at large in the streets of Elizabethan London (an impoverished scholar, say, without land, title, or acquaintance in court), you might have tried your luck as a poet or a playwright. It was an age that delighted in the rush of words to which we now affix the seals and stamps of literature. Conceivably you could have made your way into the circle of patronage surrounding Sir Walter Raleigh or Lord Strange. You might also have been imprisoned for sedition or hanged as a spy, but on the way to the scaffold you at least would have known that you had walked, if only briefly, on the world's stage and that the queen's ministers thought well enough of your wit to kill you for the crime of a well-turned phrase.

So, too, in the nineteenth century, whether in Europe or on the East

Coast of America, authors of no command the attention of princes and the adulation of the mob. Lord Byron's contemporaries trembled at the approach of his verses; Dickens lectured to crowds not unlike those that now attend concerts by Garth Brooks; all of Boston wept in the presence of Emerson's sermons; Victor Hugo could have been elected president of France.

During the first half of the twentieth century the figure of the literary hero retained an aura of power and authority—think of James Joyce, of Thomas Mann, or Ernest Hemingway as *The Old Man and the Sea*—but the role has been rendered irrelevant by television and the hydrogen bomb, reduced to farce by Norman Mailer's traipses around the department-store boys' signing circuit dressed up as the persona of King Lear.

**T**he literary crowd likes to moan the death of the written word and regret the disappearance of “public intellectuals” who supposedly ordered the readers of American newspapers, like a flock of confused sheep, into the pastures of enlightenment. The familiar dirge can be best understood as advertising promotion: isn't that the modern world has abandoned the written word rather than certain kinds of literary usage or construction have lost their currency and force. The surge of the human intellect always flows into the sea of public event, but in the twentieth century the rivers of expression drain the uplands of the sciences and the watersheds of the arts and computer technologies. Perhaps ask the questions they deem important (What is man? Why do I live? Why to die?) not of poets or novelists but of chemists and cosmetic surgeons.

HBO and prime-time television offer the rewards of both fame and fortune that long ago and once upon a time attracted the Cambridge wit to the Elizabethan stage, and were Shakespeare now alive on St. Crispin's you could expect to find him arranging the play of light and shadow in a Hollywood movie studio. A Wall Street investment bank composes a seven-page prospectus laying out the plan for the merger of two pharmaceutical



es, and its author's fee comes up to amount (maybe \$4 million, possibly much as \$10 million) that dwarfs earnings of all the books enrolled any season's bestseller list. The sums large corporations routinely allot y year to upgrading their communications systems exceed, by a multiple of four, the annual subsidies grudgingly donated to the National Endowments for the Humanities and Arts. I've known lawyers to come to trust agreements with as many as of hidden meaning as can be had in Herman Melville's chapter the whiteness of Moby Dick.

Last winter when the Clinton Administration identified the 831 guests had stayed overnight in the White House, did you see the names of any on the list? Steven Spielberg appeared by, and so did Barbra Streisand and Tom Hanks, but where was Thomas Pynchon? The President has read *High Noon* no fewer than twenty times. How many times do you think I read *The Crying of Lot 49*? I don't want to bore you with the obvious, but when have you seen a golfer on a golf course with Michael Jackson, on the screen with Ted Koppel, on the cover of *Vanity Fair*?

Which is, I think, your mother's principal objection to your thesis of a literary career. Where's the glamour? The hope of adventure? The chance of an appearance in the gossip columns? Within the ghetto of the literary life, the money is small, the accommodations poor, the circle of acquaintance necessarily limited (like that of a motorcycle or kennel club), conversation paranoid, the people almost never pretty.

Your mother tends to exaggerate the importance of appearances (one of her traits of character that both of us must hope Count Faranelli finds engaging), and when she speaks of writers persons uniformly "sallow, bitter, preoccupied, envious, furtive, and so on," she overstates her point. It's not that all writers lurk in corners drinking on old cocktail cheese. I've known writers who dine on pheasant. Some of them stand in the center of the room. A few of them write readable books.

But neither is your mother entirely right. Why squander your talent and

intelligence on a career that leads, even under the best of circumstances, nowhere but into the footnoted gloom of one of the country's neo-Gothic universities? Fast-forward the calendar to the year 2027 and grant yourself the unlikely favor of literary success—the author of four novels critically acclaimed on three continents (none of which sold more than 15,000 copies in hardcover and 40,000 in paper), celebrated by *Newsweek* as "the poet of despair" and by *Time* as "the conscience of the age," writer in residence at Duke, occasional but esteemed contributor to *The New York Review of Books*, sought after by the sponsors of summer creative-writing programs, the lion of Bread Loaf—groomed by librarians, cosseted by graduate students, fed from the dish of foundation grants.

All well and good and devoutly to be wished, but to what purpose? Books have so little to do with the business of America that the writers who aspire to the status of literary trademarks reserve their most vivid narratives to the story of the self. But if it is the life and not the book that becomes the work of art, why go to the intermediate trouble of constructing sentences instead of leveraged-buyout deals?

Become a partner at Salomon Brothers, write episodes of *Seinfeld* or jokes for David Letterman, speculate on the Shanghai Stock Exchange, sell music videos to the Russians, curry favor with George Soros, but keep thy foot out of English departments and flee the company of young women familiar with the names of Joseph Conrad and Marcel Proust.

Work the Alaska salmon run or wander with the Navajo, but do so because you wish to travel, not because you plan to write a book. Make the mistake of thinking that you can decide to become a writer and you've already lost the bet. Writers happen by accident, not by design. They have as little choice in the matter as lemmings toppling over cliffs. If and when the spirit moves you (and you find yourself being drawn irretrievably to the sea), it won't occur to you to ask or heed anybody's advice, least of all that of

your fond and word-ridden uncle,

Dyer

## THE BOFFINS BAFFLED

*What chemistry, we are often asked, takes place in the succulent bosom of the sherry casks where The Macallan lies slumbering for a decade (at least) before it is allowed out to meet the bottle?*

The fact is, we do not know.



It is a matter of history, of course, that someone in the last century discovered that whisky ages best in oaken casks which have previously contained sherry (and that today The Macallan is the *last malt whisky* exclusively to be so matured).

And it is a matter of fact that in goes the translucent stripling spirit. And out comes amber-gold nectar positively *billowing* with flavour.

But let us take our cue from a party of scientists whom we once invited to explore the matter. 'Magic!' they exclaimed, swigging their drams in a most unboffinly manner. 'But magic is merely undiscovered science and we'd like to take some home for *further investigation*.'

## THE MACALLAN. THE SINGLE MALT SCOTCH.

THE MACALLAN® Scotch Whisky 43% alc/vol  
Sole U.S. Importer Remy America, Inc., New York, N.Y.  
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# HARPER'S INDEX

- Average change in the federal taxes an American earning less than \$22,600 will pay under the new tax law : +\$19
- Average change in the federal taxes an American earning more than \$246,000 will pay : -\$16,157
- Ratio of Americans earning less than \$22,600 to those earning more than \$246,000 : 40:1
- Percentage of Americans earning more than \$246,000 who met Bill Clinton last year : 11
- Percentage of Americans who believe they have seen a UFO : 11
- Points by which this falls short of the percentage who believe the July Mars landing was a fake : 6
- Seconds of booing elicited by Apple's announcement of its deal with Microsoft at a trade show last August : 42
- Years from now, "in a perfect world," that no tobacco manufacturers would exist, according to the Liggett Group's CEO : 30
- Minutes of tobacco chewing and spitting aired on the broadcast of the 1986 World Series : 23.9
- Minutes aired on last year's World Series : 2.3
- Number of tickets to U2's first 30 U.S. concerts this year that went unsold : 156,626
- Months two British neighbors spent hooting at owls at night before realizing they were hooting at each other : 12
- Number of words per story that United Press International recommended last March that its writers not exceed : 300
- Amount the Agency for International Development spent on its new computer system : \$71,000,000
- Number of months the system has been unable to link the AID's 40 field offices to the agency's accounting program : 10
- Estimated number of people who could be fed for one year with the food Americans waste in one day : 240,183
- Percentage change since 1986 in U.S. food aid distributed worldwide : -29
- Portion of McDonald's 1995 revenue that came from overseas : 1/2
- Fine as of last August for opening a McDonald's in Bermuda : \$5,000
- Chance that an eligible Haitian voter participated in last April's senate election : 1 in 20
- Hours after being elected last July that Liberia's new leader promised not to be "a wicked president" : 1
- Number of Uzis Israel's largest arms maker plans to sell in the U.S. next year : 2,000
- Rounds by which each gun's magazine capacity will have to be reduced to conform with U.S. law : 20
- Number of Illinois death-row prisoners released since 1977 after their convictions were overturned : 9
- Number of Illinois prisoners executed since then : 8
- Chances that an American who contracted the plague last year was infected by fleas from a prairie dog : 2 in 5
- Average number of acres added to Las Vegas each day : 3
- Average amount of pressure an American woman exerts on a stiletto heel, in pounds per square inch : 552
- Estimated number of U.S. deaths each year caused by autoerotic asphyxiation : 750
- Percentage change since 1994 in Prozac prescriptions or recommendations for children under the age of 12 : +212
- Rank of listening to other students among the classroom activities that schoolchildren find most boring : 1
- Number of America's poorest children who will not benefit from the new \$500 child-tax credit : 11,336,731
- Seating capacity of the President's new Hot Spring Grandee® hot tub : 7
- Rank of Hillary Clinton, among the best-selling Halloween masks last year at Washington's Backstage costume shop : 1
- Rank of Bill Clinton and the Cryptkeeper : 2,3
- Price of a pair of fangs from New York City's Sabretooth boutique : \$65
- Change since June 28 in the number of feet between Mike Tyson and Hannibal Lecter at Hollywood's wax museum : -68
- Price the Philadelphia Museum of Art charges for six ounces of pasta shaped like Rodin's "The Thinker" : \$3.50
- Estimated number of cans of Campbell's cream of mushroom soup spilled on a San Diego interstate last February : 55,800
- Maximum distance, in feet, that a pumpkin has ever been mechanically hurled without the use of explosives : 2,710

*Figures cited have been adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of August 1997. Sources are listed on page 77.*

*"Harper's Index" is a registered trademark.*



A black and white portrait of Maia Ettinger, a man with glasses and a slight smile, wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt. The text "HATES POLLUTERS. LOVES PLASTIC." is overlaid on the image.

HATES POLLUTERS. LOVES PLASTIC.

*Maia Ettinger*  
Member: Rainforest Action Network, Amnesty International,  
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# READINGS

[Essay]

## A TECHNO-POX UPON THE LAND

*From "A Cruel and Transient Agriculture," a lecture given in April by David Ehrenfeld at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. Ehrenfeld teaches biology at Rutgers University and is the author, most recently, of Beginning Again: People and Nature in the New Millennium. His essay "Vanishing Knowledge" appeared in the March 1996 issue of Harper's Magazine.*

**T**he modern history of agriculture has two faces. The first, a happy face, is turned toward nonfarmers who live in the developed world. It speaks brightly of technological miracles, such as the "Green Revolution" and, more recently, genetic engineering, that have resulted in the increased production of food for the world's hungry. The second face is turned toward the few remaining farmers who have survived these miracles. It is downcast and silent, like a mourner at a funeral.

The Green Revolution, a fundamental change in agricultural technology, arose in the 1960s and '70s from the assumption that poverty and hunger in poor countries were the result of low agricultural productivity, that subsistence farming as it had occurred for centuries was the basis of a brutish existence. In response to this assumption, plant breeders hit on an elegant method to increase dramatically the yield of the world's most important crops, especially wheat and rice. Put simply, this plan in-

involved redesigning the plants themselves, increasing the size of the plants' reproductive parts—the seed that we eat—and decreasing the size of the vegetative parts—the stems, roots, and leaves that we throw away. From a technical point of view, this worked. Unfortunately, that's not the end of the story. As in other seemingly simple, technical manipulations of nature, there have been undesirable and unintended consequences.

The primary problem is that Green Revolution agribusiness requires vast amounts of energy to grow and sustain these "miracle crops." Oil must be burned to make the large quantities of nitrogen fertilizer on which these plants depend. Farmers also must invest heavily in toxic herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides; in irrigation systems; and in spraying, harvesting, and processing machinery for the weakened, seed-heavy plants. Large sums of money must be borrowed to pay for these "inputs" before the growing season starts in the hope that crop sales will allow farmers to repay the debt later in the season. When that hope is frustrated, the farmer often loses his farm and is driven into a migrant pool of cheap labor for corporate-farming operations or is forced to seek work in the landless, teeming cities.

**T**he Green Revolution is an early instance of the co-opting of human needs by the technoeconomic system. It is not a black-and-white example: some farmers have been able to keep on farming in spite of the high inputs required; others are mixing traditional methods of farming with selected newer technologies. But the latest manifestation of corporate agriculture, genetic



engineering, is black-and-white. Excluding military spending on fabulously expensive, dysfunctional weapons systems, there is no more dramatic case of people having their needs appropriated for the sake of profit at any cost. Like high-input agriculture, genetic engineering is often justified as a humane technology, one that feeds more people with better food. Nothing could be further from the truth. With very few exceptions, the whole point of genetic engineering is to increase the sales of chemicals and bioengineered products to dependent farmers,

and to increase the dependence of farmers on their new handlers, the seed companies and the oil, chemical, and pharmaceutical companies that own them.

Social problems aside, this new agricultural biotechnology is on much shakier scientific ground than the Green Revolution ever was. Genetic engineering is based on the premise that we can take a gene from species A, where it does some desirable thing, and move it into species B, where it will continue to do that same desirable thing. Most genetic engineers know that this is not always true, but the biotech industry as a whole acts as if it were. First, genes are not like tiny machines. The expression of their output can change when they are put in a new genetic and cellular environment. Second, genes usually have multiple effects. Undesirable effects that are suppressed in species A may be expressed when the gene is moved to species B. And third, many of the most important, genetically regulated traits that agricultural researchers deal with are controlled by multiple genes, perhaps on different chromosomes, and these are very resistant to manipulation by transgenic technology.

Because of these scientific limitations, agricultural biotechnology has been largely confined to applications that are basically simpleminded despite their technical complexity. Even here we find problems. The production of herbicide-resistant crop seeds is one example. Green Revolution crops tend to be on the wimpy side when it comes to competing with weeds—hence the heavy use of herbicides in recent decades. But many of the weeds are relatives of the crops, so the herbicides that kill the weeds can kill the crops too, given bad luck with weather and the timing of spraying. Enter the seed/chemical companies with a clever, profitable, unscrupulous idea. Why not introduce the gene for resistance to our own brand of herbicide into our own crop seeds, and then sell the patented seeds and patented herbicide as a package?

Never mind that this encourages farmers to apply recklessly large amounts of weedkiller, and that many herbicides have been associated with human sickness, including lymphoma. Nor that the genes for herbicide resistance can move naturally from the crops to the related weeds via pollen transfer, rendering the herbicide ineffective in a few years. What matters, as an agricultural biotechnologist once remarked to me, is earning enough profit to keep the company happy.

A related agricultural biotechnology is the transfer of bacterial or plant genes that produce a natural insecticide directly into crops such as corn and cotton. An example is Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), which has been widely used as an

[Offer]

## A DRUG LORD'S OLIVE BRANCH

*From a confidential military computer file obtained in July by the Mexican newsweekly Proceso that was among several files taken from the office of Mexico's secretary of defense, General Enrique Cervantes Aguirre, by two officers now facing charges for disclosing military secrets. The file, which was allegedly forwarded to President Ernesto Zedillo, indicates that Amado Carrillo Fuentes, the Mexican drug-cartel leader who reportedly died in July after undergoing plastic surgery, attempted to negotiate a settlement with the Mexican government in January. The government denies that it was involved in such negotiations.*

JANUARY 14, 1997

Amado Carrillo Fuentes wants to arrive at a settlement. He does not seek to surrender. He wants to negotiate with the government and arrive at a pact.

What Carrillo wants from the government:

- To be allowed to pursue his business
- Guaranteed peace for his family
- To keep 50 percent of his possessions

What he offers the government in return:

- To help put an end to non-organized drug trafficking
- To act like a businessman, not like a criminal
- To not sell drugs in Mexico
- To sell drugs outside the country; that is, in the United States and Europe
- To bring dollars into Mexico in order to help its economy
- To act neither violently nor in defiance

If this is not accepted, he will transfer his offer, with its benefits, to another country.





is photograph of runoff from nickel mining was taken by Edward Burtynsky at the Sudbury Basin in Ontario, Canada. Burtynsky's photographs of the basin were on display last fall at the Mira Godard Gallery in Toronto.

external dust or spray to kill harmful beetles and moths. In this traditional use, Bt breaks down into harmless components in a day or two, and the surviving pests do not get a chance to evolve resistance to it. But with Bt now produced continuously inside genetically engineered crops, which are planted over hundreds of thousands of acres, the emergence of genetic resistance among the pests becomes almost a certainty.

Monsanto, one of the world's largest manufacturers of agricultural chemicals, has patented cottonseed containing genes for Bt. Advertised as being effective against bollworms without the use of additional insecticides, 1,800,000 acres in five southern states were planted with this transgenic seed in 1996, at a cost to farmers of not only the seed itself but an additional \$32-per-acre "technology fee" paid to Monsanto. Heavy bollworm infestation occurred in spite of the special seed, forcing farmers to spray expensive insecticides anyway. Those farmers who wanted to use seeds from the surviving crop to replace the damaged crop found that Monsanto's licensing agreement, like most others in the industry, permitted them only one planting.

Troubles with Monsanto's genetically engineered seed have not been confined to cotton.

This past May, Monsanto Canada and its licensee, Limagrain Canada Seeds, recalled 60,000 bags of "Roundup-ready" canola seeds because they mistakenly contained a gene that had not been tested by the government for human consumption. These seeds, engineered to resist Monsanto's most profitable product, the herbicide Roundup, were enough to plant more than 600,000 acres. Two farmers had already planted the seeds when Monsanto discovered its mistake.

**T**here is another shaky scientific premise of agricultural biotechnology. This concerns the transfer of animal or plant genes from the parent species into microorganisms, so that the valuable products of these genes can then be produced in large commercial batches. The assumption here is that these transgenic products, when administered back to the parent species in large doses, will simply increase whatever desirable effect they normally have. Again, this is simplistic thinking that totally ignores the great complexity of living organisms and the consequences of tampering with them.

In the United States, one of the most widely deployed instances of this sort of biotechnology is the use of recombinant bovine



growth hormone (rBGH), which is produced by placing slightly modified cow genes into fermentation tanks containing bacteria, then injected into lactating cows to make them yield more milk. This is done despite our nationwide milk glut and despite the fact that the use of rBGH will probably accelerate the demise of the small dairy farm, since only large farms are able to take on the extra debt for the more expensive feeds, the high-tech feed-management systems, and the added veterinary care that go along with its use.

[Apology]

## THE PATH TO FORGIVENESS

*From a correction in the June 30 issue of The Weekly Standard. In July 1996, self-help author Deepak Chopra sued the magazine for libel; the suit was settled out of court.*

**T**he July 1, 1996, issue of *The Weekly Standard* featured a cover story on the best-selling author Deepak Chopra. Although we operated in good faith in publishing the article, we are now convinced that certain allegations reported in that story were false.

Based on evidence provided to us over the past year, we are now convinced that Dr. Chopra did not engage the services of a prostitute in 1991. Evidence provided by Dr. Chopra's representatives has convinced us that someone else used a credit card with Dr. Chopra's name and forged Dr. Chopra's signature to charge those services.

Based on evidence that we recently received, we also retract the conclusion that Dr. Chopra plagiarized from another published work.

We also would no longer state that his company's herbal remedies have high levels of bug parts and rodent hairs, or levels higher than other such organic products.

More broadly, upon further examination of Dr. Chopra's career, we now believe that the general tone of our article was unfair to him. Although it is obviously appropriate to debate the merits of Dr. Chopra's teachings and writings, the editors now believe that our use of terms such as "huckster" and "Hindu televangelist" was inappropriate and unjust.

The side effects of rBGH on cows are also serious. Recombinant BGH-related problems—as stated on the package insert by its manufacturer, Monsanto—include bloat, diarrhea, diseases of the knees and feet, feeding disorders, fevers, reduced blood hemoglobin levels, cystic ovaries, uterine pathology, reduced pregnancy rates, smaller calves, and mastitis—a breast infection that can result, according to the insert, in “visibly abnormal milk.” Treatment of mastitis can lead to the presence of antibiotics in milk, probably accelerating the spread of antibiotic resistance among bacteria that cause human disease. Milk from rBGH-treated cows may also contain insulin growth factor, IGF-1, which has been implicated in human breast and gastrointestinal cancers.

Another potential problem is an indirect side effect of the special nutritional requirements of rBGH-treated cows. Because these cows require more protein, their food is supplemented with ground-up animals, a practice that has been associated with bovine spongiform encephalopathy, also known as “mad cow disease.” The recent British epidemic of BSE appears to have been associated with an increased incidence of the disease's human analogue, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. There seems little reason to increase the risk of this terrible disease for the sake of a biotechnology that we don't need. If cows stay off of hormones and concentrate on eating grass, all of us will be much better off.

Meanwhile the biotechnology juggernaut rolls on, converting humanity's collective agricultural heritage from an enduring, farmer-controlled lifestyle to an energy-dependent, corporate “process.” The ultimate co-optation is the patenting of life. The Supreme Court's ruling in the case of *Diamond v. Chakrabarty* in 1980 paved the way for corporations to obtain industrial, or “utility,” patents on living organisms, from bacteria to human cells. These patents operate like the patents on mechanical inventions, granting the patent holder a more sweeping and long-lasting control than had been conferred by the older forms of plant patents. The upshot of this is that farmers who save seeds from utility-patented crop plants for replanting on their own farms next year may have committed a federal crime; it also means that farmers breeding utility-patented cattle may have to pay royalties to the corporation holding the patent.

The life patents allowed by the U.S. Patent Office have been remarkably broad. Agracetus, a subsidiary of Monsanto, was issued patents covering all genetically engineered cotton. The patents are currently being challenged but remain in effect until corporate appeals are ex-





his photograph of the incineration of a cow infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy, "mad cow disease," was taken in Wales by Nigel Dickinson. It appears in *The World Press Photo Yearbook 1997*. Dickinson lives in Paris.

hausted. Companies such as DNA Plant Technology, Calgene, and others are taking out patents that cover many recombinant varieties of vegetable species, from garden peas to the entire genus *Brassica*, which includes broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower. The German chemical and pharmaceutical giant Hoechst has obtained multiple patents for medical uses of a species of *Coleus*, despite the fact that this medicinal plant has been used since antiquity in Hindu and Ayurvedic medicine to treat cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, and neurological diseases.

Somehow, in the chaos of technological change, we have lost the distinction between a person and a corporation, inexplicably valuing profit at any cost over basic human needs. In doing so we have forsaken our farmers, the spiritual descendants of those early Hebrew and Greek farmers and pastoralists who first gave us our understanding of social justice, democracy, and the existence of a power greater than our own. No amount of lip service to the goal of feeding the world's hungry or to the glory of a new technology, and no amount of transient increases in the world's grain production, can hide this terrible truth.

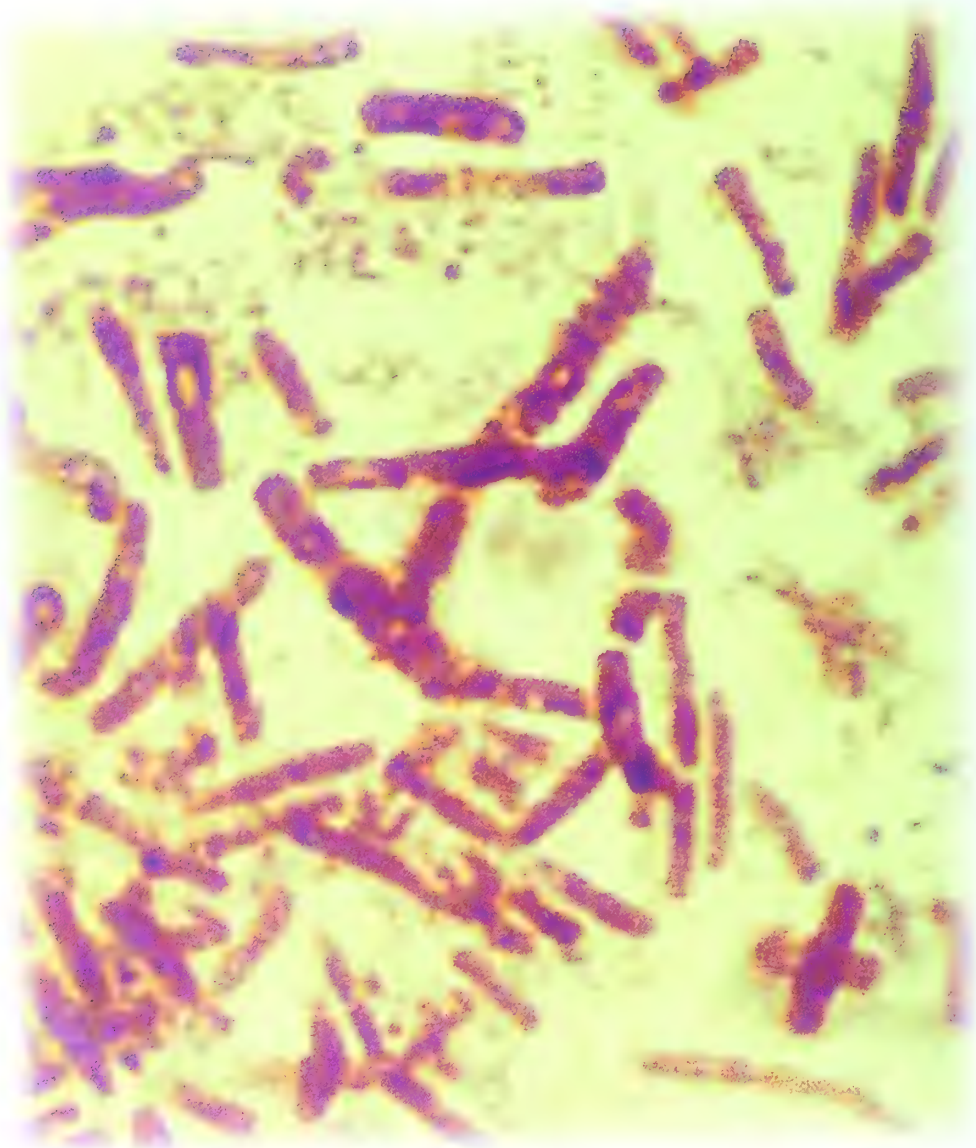
[Violations]

## HANFORD'S DAY AFTER

From a Department of Energy report released in July concerning a May 14 chemical-storage-tank explosion at the Hanford Nuclear Site in Washington State. The report details a series of failures to follow emergency-response procedure in the aftermath of the accident. In addition to the failures described below, the DOE found that the chemicals inside the exploded tank had been stored improperly, that arriving workers with no knowledge of the emergency "Take Cover" conditions were able to enter the facility, and that radiological tests of workers exposed to plutonium and other hazardous chemicals were not thoroughly evaluated until one month after the accident.

**O**n May 14, an explosion occurred in the Plutonium Reclamation Facility. The steel lid of a tank in the Chemical Preparation Room was torn off, rupturing a water line and causing extensive damage to the room, including the doors and roof. Toxic chemicals were released in a plume through the main ventilation stack







## Our culture is obsessed with waste.

The culture we speak of is not only our company culture, but a useful little culture of bacteria and fungi. These voracious bugs clean up oily waste through a process called bioremediation. We've been using it in many places. Truthfully, nature has always degraded substances this way. We just speed the process and make it more efficient. We combine air, water, a bulking agent like straw, fertilizer to nourish 'native' bacteria, and oily waste. After turning and mixing, the microbes eat the oil and leave behind rich compost. In nature, this process may take years or even decades. By optimizing environmental conditions for the microbes and revving up their metabolisms, it can take only a couple of months. What's left is a topsoil mixture we've safely used for revegetation of old oil and gas well sites. It's true that oil exploration can sometimes result in undesirable by-products and the need for site reclamation. By enlisting nature's help, we're solving both problems. And while cleaning up after ourselves is often required by law, we've always felt that it makes good business sense. If we can do it within the natural order of things, then to us that makes the most sense of all.

*Oily sludge was transformed into plantable compost that was spread around an old drilling site, then contoured to match the landscape. We planted a seed mixture of Sand Love Grass and Little Blue Stem. Not only did it thrive, but the area became a habitat for wildlife.*



People Do.



and through small crevices in the roof and the roof/wall interface. Plutonium-contaminated water escaped under the doors of the facility. A security lockdown was initiated at the facility, and the Take Cover siren was activated. Employees were instructed to report to the main Plutonium Finishing Plant facility.

#### WHAT WENT WRONG?

*Officials failed to follow the emergency response procedure for Take Cover and lockdown conditions.*

- Conflicting guidance given to workers resulted in chemical exposure.
- There were several instances of personnel outside sheltered areas, including eight construction workers on break at a trailer who, in response to the directive to report to the Plutonium Finishing Plant, walked through an area downwind of the explosion and the exhaust stack where a yellow-brown emission had been seen.
- There were several instances of workers retrieving personal belongings, not wearing proper protective equipment, or not being advised of the Take Cover condition.
- The process for accounting for employees during Take Cover was inadequate.

*Preparation for emergency response to chemical hazards was inadequate.*

- Chemical-monitoring equipment was not easily accessible.
- Twenty-eight of thirty-six respiratory-protection devices were past due for the required two-year inspection.

*Officials failed to follow the procedure for classifying the emergency and notifying off-site agencies.*

- Classification of the emergency, which should take place immediately, occurred two hours after the event. After classification, notification of outside agencies took over one hour when the requirement is fifteen minutes.
- Notification to Washington Department of Ecology did not follow regulations.

*Officials failed to initiate appropriate actions in response to workers' exposure and nonhazardous conditions.*

- No one in the Safety Command was assigned to care for exposed workers.
- Four hours elapsed before workers were released to report to the hospital.
- No formal agreement was made with the local hospital for proper medical handling of workers exposed to chemical contaminants.
- Workers were not properly evaluated on-site. Neither workers nor their clothing were surveyed for radiological and chemical contamination before going to the hospital. This included a plant worker who at the time of the explosion was in a changing room next to

the accident site and who felt the pressure wave caused by the explosion.

- Workers transported themselves to the local hospital.

[Scene]

## THE CHRISTIAN FRIGHT

From "The Hell House Outreach Manual," a 263-page guide to creating a "spiritually based" haunted house, published by the Abundant Life Christian Center (ALCC) in Arvada, Colorado, and sold last year to churches in forty-one states. Visitors to Hell House are guided through various scenes that depict "choices that can have an end result of ushering people into hell." The abortion scene appears below; other scenes include a teenager committing suicide, the funeral of a homosexual man who has died of AIDS, and a car accident in which a father, driving drunk, kills his own family. The ALCC, which will host its third annual Hell House this month, reminds first-time hosts that "Hell House is not a glorification or observation of Halloween! This outreach happens during the 'Halloween' time of year because that is when the average, unsaved American is conditioned to visit haunted-house type attractions. Hell House simply capitalizes on the seasonal opportunity for the sake of the gospel."

#### CHARACTERS

**Demon.** The demon is the tour guide through all issue-oriented scenes. The energy level and quality of the Hell House drama rests squarely on the demon's shoulders. Throughout the duration of the performances, the demon's voice needs to sound "unhuman."

**Chrissy, the girl who is having the abortion.** Chrissy's lines are few, but her impact is gigantic. She is one of the characters who will be talked about most by the visiting public. She cannot hold back or come across as being shy or embarrassed to be doing what she is doing. Screaming, crying violently, and convulsing all fall into her bag of tricks. She must play her part convincingly or the entire abortion scene will be flat.

**Doctor.** Gives the appearance of performing the actual abortion procedure.

**Nurse.** Assists the doctor with the overall procedure.

**Assistant.** Monitors the patient and the medical instruments.

#### PROPS

**Note:** You may have a nurse, doctor, or someone else in the medical field who is a part



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AND A NATIONAL HOLIDAY MEANS TWO PRACTICES INSTEAD OF ONE.



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The above is a detail of "Bullies" wallpaper created by Philadelphia artist Virgil Marti. It was included in *Apocalyptic Wallpaper*, exhibition in August at Ohio State University's Wexner Center for the Arts. Marti modeled the wallpaper on the French "toile" design; he used photos from his junior high school yearbook for the wallpaper's cameo portraits.

of your church. These people will be a great resource for giving this scene the authentic look it needs.

*Green or blue gossamer for the walls.* Purchase fireproof gossamer if at all possible. If you can't afford gossamer, check Target or Wal-Mart for green or blue paper tablecloths.

*Complete medical attire ("greenies") for doctor, nurse, and assistant.*

*Complete patient attire for Chrissy.*

*Examination table for Chrissy.* If an authentic examination table cannot be located, pad a regular table for this character's comfort.

*Medical instruments.*

*Pieces of meat placed in a glass bowl to look like pieces of fetus.* Do whatever best to purchase a meat product that closely resembles pieces of a baby. The more real you can make that meat look, the more powerful the impact on every person who visits. The meat is going to get handled and moved around a lot. Be prepared to have some "prop" on hand "each day if necessary."

*Theatrical blood.* Because of the large amount of blood used in this scene and in others, someone should be responsible for mixing a vat of it each evening that Hell House is open. Store the blood in one location: Blood Central. A

representative from each scene can come to Blood Central to pick up that scene's supply. Be sure to keep your carpet safe!

*Small vacuum with hose.* Any small house vacuum will work. It is used primarily for sound. The sound, combined with Chrissy's convulsions, leaves a definite impression.

#### SCRIPT

As the tour enters the room, Chrissy is lying on the operating table; her legs are up as if in stirrups. The doctor is seated and appears to be performing the abortion. His medical instruments are clearly visible. Hospital sound effects are playing in the background. The moment the tour is within earshot, Chrissy begins crying. She is extremely distraught. Throughout the entire scene, the medical staff is cold, uncaring, abrupt, and completely insensitive to Chrissy.

DEMON: You're about to witness the product of young love, compliments of the back seat of a '94 Camaro. (The medical staff is at work. Chrissy is writhing and breathing heavily.)

ASSISTANT: Chrissy, be still. This was your choice!

DOCTOR: (with extreme intensity) Val, I said I need more gauze! She is really bleeding.

CHRISSEY: Why . . . Why . . . you said there wouldn't be—



DOCTOR: SHUT UP! You pay the money! I do the work AND the talking!

DEMON: And the killing!

DOCTOR: This is gonna hurt!

DEMON: They're convinced that a child is only tissue. But the truth is that that tissue has a brain and a heartbeat—and can feel his little arm being RIPPED off his body. *(As the demon says the word RIPPED, the doctor yanks; Chrissy screams and jerks with pain and begins to cry steadily.)*

CHRISSEY: *(incredibly emotional, barely understandable through her tears)* You lied to me! It does hurt! You're hurting me— *(Chrissy's words trail off as if she can barely take the pain. The assistant looks annoyed that Chrissy is not controlling herself.)*

DOCTOR: *(irritated)* Chrissy, it's only a medical procedure!

CHRISSEY: *(screaming and crying)* Don't do this, I want my . . . I want . . . MY BABY! *(The nurse places the first piece of bloody baby in the glass bowl just as Chrissy screams, MY BABY! Chrissy also reaches for the bowl as she says that phrase.)*

ASSISTANT: You should have thought of that a long time ago.

DOCTOR: We're going to sedate the next one who comes in here like this. *(The vacuum is turned on and Chrissy shakes and convulses. Her entire body rattles as the vacuum removes the final pieces of her child.)*

DEMON: It's just too bad that I didn't get YOU! *(The demon points at someone in the tour group, looks right into his or her eyes, and holds the pose for a dramatic second or two. The demon then quickly changes gears and cranks the energy back up.)* We must keep moving! There's much more to enjoy! Follow me . . .

[Exhortation]

## KREMLIN SQUARE-OFF

*From an open letter written in June by Lev Rokhlin, a former Russian general who led the 1994 assault on Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, and is now the chairman of the defense committee of the State Duma, Russia's lower house of Parliament. In July, President Boris Yeltsin announced plans to cut the size of the military by 500,000 men over the next eighteen months.*

**M**r. Boris Yeltsin! Mr. Supreme Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation! Pursuant to your orders, dramatic cuts must be made to the armed

forces within the next two years. The government has received clear instructions from the International Monetary Fund that the army must make do with a budget not exceeding 3.5 percent of next year's GDP. This is a figure that will fully destroy the armed forces. What prompted such a decision? Why are defense spending and the future of the army dictated from abroad?

Perhaps you believe, Mr. President, that there is no longer an external threat to Russia. The facts suggest otherwise. The United States, which faces no threats and which gives its armed forces twenty times what Russia gives hers, has announced its vital interests in the oil regions of Azerbaijan and the Baltic states. The NATO countries have also decided to expand their alliance to our western border. At the talks in Paris, Mr. Commander in Chief, you tried to keep up appearances though the game was clearly lost. No one asked for your consent, because no one needed it. The West dictates to us what kind of military and political systems we should have and ignores our interests.

It is no coincidence that in Helsinki in March, President Clinton agreed to comply with the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty until the year 2009. By that time, our strategic nuclear forces will have been practically destroyed. No appropriations have been made to develop new weapons. And there is no funding either to maintain our strategic nuclear forces or to extend the service of missiles that remain on combat alert but are already past their service life. As soon as the threat of retaliation against our possible aggressors ceases to exist—that is, after 2009—Russia will face unlimited military and political diktat.

We are very much aware of why all this is happening. It is because you never had the time to give Russia your leadership. Your decisions are impromptu reflections of your mood. As a result, industry and agriculture have collapsed. All the rest, too, has been destroyed. Only handouts from the IMF save Russia from total disintegration.

Esteemed Mr. President, direct violations of the Constitution occur to which you close your eyes. You have deceived the people and the military without fulfilling your electoral promises. Your henchmen, such as Anatoly Chubais, are doing everything possible to deprive the men and women in uniform of what few privileges they still enjoy.

Furthermore, you are personally responsible for the war unleashed in Chechnya. At the time, the war seemed unthinkable and impossible. But it happened—in defiance of common sense. Your hasty, ill-considered decision to invade Chechnya prevented the army from con-



ducting the necessary preparations. You sent eighteen-year-old boys, many of whom had never held a weapon in their hands, to fight mercenaries and mature soldiers. After the dismal failure of that adventure, you abruptly ordered the army to retreat from Chechnya, leaving a whole regiment of prisoners and the entire Russian-speaking population to be exterminated. Tens of thousands of innocent citizens and thousands of servicemen died. Thousands more

[Appreciation]

## DEAR JOHN

*From an open letter written in May by Anatoly Adamishin, then Russian ambassador to England, just prior to his leaving his post. A portion of the letter appeared in the May 18 issue of the Sunday Times of London.*

**T**he longer one stays in Britain, the more one becomes convinced that it is an enchanted place. The British prefer not to be overbearing. When confronted with rudeness, they step away. If they meet somebody's eye, the first thing they do is offer a smile. And where else in the world can you find a country with so many public toilets? And such well-maintained toilets at that. English lavatories are not only spotlessly clean; they are cozy. Nowhere else have I seen lavatory walls tiled with mosaics, as they are in the men's room of London's Victoria Embankment. In some lavatories, there are lithographic prints in fine frames and potted plants. In others, there is even pleasant music playing.

You may shrug this off. But when a man reaches a certain age (with its attendant disorders), he comes to appreciate an abundance of public toilets. England is a caring country, in which public conveniences (as lavatories are called here) are reasonable distances from one another. What's more, the locations of toilets are often posted on signs. It is a matter of hearty satisfaction to see a sign announcing that the nearest toilet is just 400 yards away.

It does not take long to get used to such luxuries. When I return to Russia and run around in search of a badly needed convenience, I truly appreciate the civilized life of the British Isles. I believe that the people here may have left the rest of mankind in the dust.

were crippled for life. They fulfilled your orders and yet you betrayed them, allowing the media to pour abuse on your army instead of on yourself. Untrained lads went into battle and died carrying out your instructions, but can you even name one soldier whom you sent to Chechnya and who died a hero's death there? Now you publicly insult the army's generals, some of whom sent their own sons to their deaths in Chechnya, by saying that they are "getting fatter and fatter" and need to be fired.

Esteemed servicemen! Under the Constitution of the Russian Federation, you are entitled to social protection. In choosing your profession you knew what a difficult and dangerous path lay ahead. You are a courageous and disciplined people. There are few among you who are corrupt and spoiled by power. The people look to you with hope.

Esteemed servicemen, you must unite! President Yeltsin believes that he has turned you all into submissive, weak-minded slaves. He has insulted you again and again. He must be made aware of your unity. It is the only thing that can preserve the army and the motherland.

[Controversy]

## IT'S RAINING, MEN

*From letters to the editor in the June 30 issue of Army Times, a weekly newspaper published in Springfield, Virginia. The letters were written in response to a May 5 article that discussed a U.S. Army rule prohibiting male soldiers from carrying umbrellas while in uniform. Female Army soldiers are allowed to carry umbrellas, as are all Air Force and Navy personnel. Stating his reason for recently rejecting a proposal to lift the ban, Army Chief of Staff General Dennis Reimer said, "The regulation is clear, and we follow regulations in the Army."*

I have the utmost respect for General Reimer, but his statement makes no sense. I wear glasses. The visor on my service cap does a marginal job of protecting them in the rain, but the service cap is impractical to wear on a regular basis. I also wear a hearing aid. If it gets wet, it is ruined, and the Army provides a replacement—at a cost of about \$800. Some say that if Reimer lifts the ban, retired generals will call him the "umbrella chief." So what? The rest of us will call him the "cares about soldiers chief."

Lt. Col. William H. Harkey  
Burke, Va.

Most everyone who has been in the Army for any length of time understands why male





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...her control over her intellect. I suddenly opened my mouth to let speak the horse, with potentially disastrous results. Now if the Army were ever to get rid of all these horses...

*Col. Lane T. Currie, U.S. AR  
Alexandria, Va.*

[Continued]

## REXUAL HARASSMENT

*From a complaint filed last fall by Barbara Monst in the U.S. District Court in Bridgeport, Connecticut, against a judge presiding at the Connecticut Superior Court. Monst seeks "compensatory and punitive damages."*

1. I, BARBARA MONST, For Herself And On Behalf  
Of All Women Similarly Situated,  
v.

JUDGE HOWARD J. MORAGHAN.

1. During the past year, on no fewer than three separate occasions while the plaintiff was in the clerk's office at the Danbury Superior Court, she was approached from the rear without warning by a large unleashed and untrained dog.

2. On each occasion, the dog aggressively nuzzled the plaintiff in such a manner that it raised her skirt, poked its snout under her skirt, and projected its snout upward toward the plaintiff's crotch.

3. On each occasion, the plaintiff did nothing whatsoever to provoke such conduct by the dog.

4. On each occasion, the owner and keeper of the dog, Judge Howard J. Moraghan, stood observing the dog's activity from a distance of several feet and did nothing to restrain the dog.

5. Each time the plaintiff was so nuzzled by the dog, her sense of having been violated was intensified by her observation that the face of the defendant broke into a smirk as he observed the plaintiff's obvious discomfort.

6. On each occasion after nuzzling the plaintiff, the dog proceeded to approach other women from the rear without warning and to repeat the raising of their skirts, the thrust of the snout, and the projection of the snout upward toward the women's crotches.

7. The defendant knew or should have known that the dog, if unrestrained, would single out women in skirts, and the dog did repeatedly select women in skirts for offensive nuzzling and did leave all other persons alone.

The present policy on umbrellas should remain in place. I assume raincoats are still an item of issue or purchase. I served twenty years without an umbrella. I did not melt.

*1st Sgt. (Ret.) Paul F. Henry  
Fort Thomas, Ky.*

I recently visited the headquarters of the United States Secret Service in Washington, D.C. I wore my Class A uniform and the standard black overcoat. It was raining the whole time I walked from the Metro stop to headquarters, and I got soaked. When I took off my overcoat, my uniform was drenched and my ribbons were discolored from the rain. I had to explain to members of the Secret Service that Army regulations prohibited me from carrying an umbrella. Their response was, "How can you be trusted to defend the country if you're too dumb to carry an umbrella?"

*Name Withheld*

The Air Force and Navy use umbrellas. I say the Army promised an adventure, not an umbrella.

*1st Sgt. (Ret.) Edwin Rodriguez  
Allentown, Pa.*

In response to your article on umbrellas, I would like to say that I see no loss of masculinity in carrying them. If I were a civilian and had a kid, I would not say, "Hey, son, see that soldier standing in the rain? I want you to grow up and be like that!" Instead, I would say, "Hey, son, see that wet soldier? He's a dork."

*PFC Dave Matthews  
Fort Bragg, N.C.*

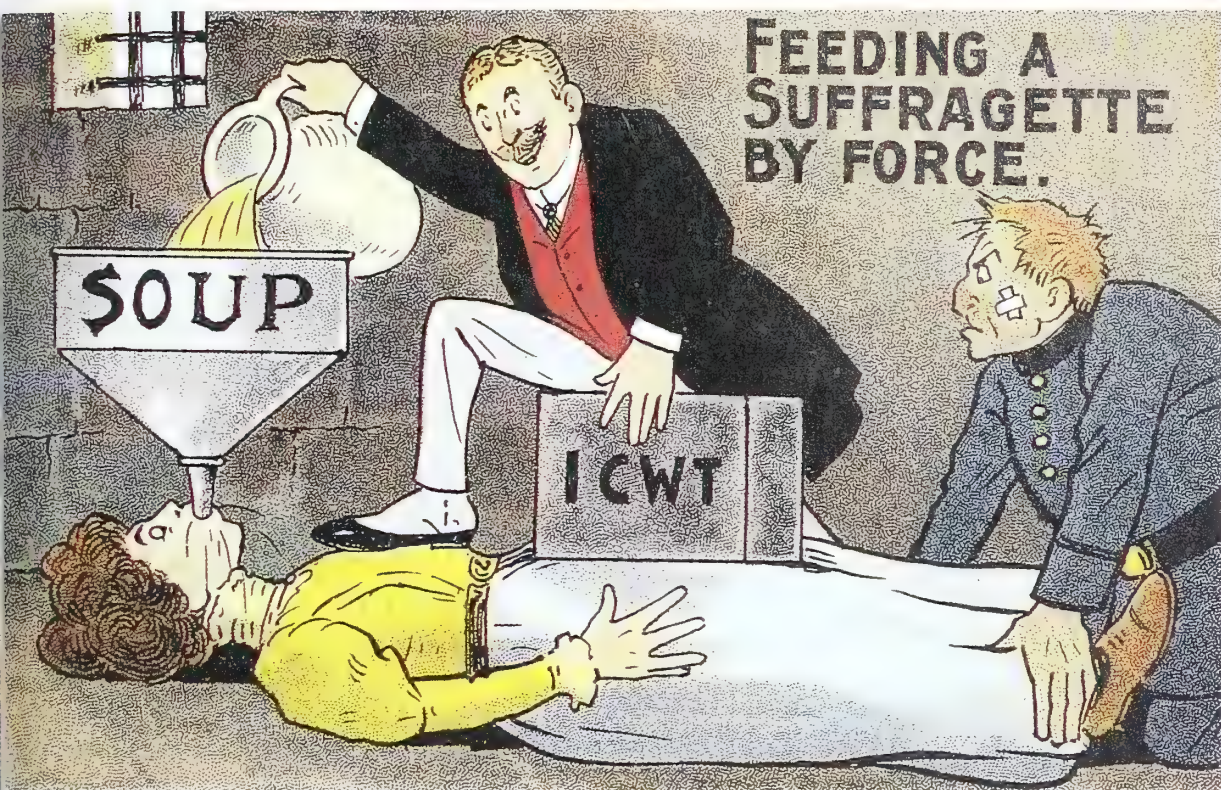
[Analysis]

## PLUMBING THE PURSE

*From "The Contents of Women's Purses: An Accessory in Crisis," by Daniel Harris, in the Spring/Summer issue of Salmagundi. Harris is the author of The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture, published by Hyperion. His essay "The Diva in Decline" appeared in the January issue of Harper's Magazine.*

**B**efore the twentieth century, when housewives began to spend more time away from home than they had ever spent before, the purse had not yet evolved into the bottomless pit of belongings that it is today. Instead, it was a largely optional accessory designed to carry a few basic items—a fan, a mirror, a handker-





The postcard above, originally printed in the early 1900s, appears in *Suffragettes to She-Devils: Women's Liberation & Beyond*, by Liz McQuiston, published by Phaidon Press in London.

chief, smelling salts, a powder puff—for brief excursions to church, the opera, the theater, or other women's homes, places where women could survive quite comfortably on the contents of the drawstring pouch slung around their wrists.

As women began to join the workforce in ever larger numbers during World War I and dramatically increased the scope of their activities to everything from lobbying for suffrage to engaging in competitive sports, the purse slowly began to bulge with a surfeit of inessentials. It was as if, in exchanging one role for another, women created on their own person a microcosm of "home," a cache of talismanic articles suggestive of the domestic world's intimacy and security.

This transition from the domestic sphere to the office was made easier by the revolution in packaging that occurred in the early part of the twentieth century. Cosmetics and hygienic products were miniaturized into squeezeable tubes and dainty roll-on sticks that could be used anywhere, in a public rest room or even out in the open at the worker's desk. But such products didn't liberate the housewife from the house so much as they liberated the house from

its foundations. In enabling women to venture out into public equipped with a portable comfort station, the tricks of consumerism turned them into white-collar pack rats who carted around a rudimentary drugstore of eyebrow pluckers, curling irons, breath fresheners, and "herbal flower rescue remedies." As women became more independent, they paradoxically became more burdened with things, so that in the course of their emancipation they acquired a new and very literal kind of ball and chain, albeit one with a lining of satin and an ebony sheen.

As deceptively commonplace as purses might seem, they are in fact mausoleums in which anachronistic feminine roles have been preserved for all time. When women discuss their pocketbooks, they frequently boast of the readiness with which they could face unforeseen disasters, claiming that "I could survive for twenty-four hours out of my purse," "it contains enough stuff that if I were trapped somewhere overnight, I could still get by," or "I carry all the emergency supplies I would need if something were to happen." In every woman's purse there lurks a hidden survivalist, a crazed



Mormon busily stocking her pantry for the coming apocalypse.

Another of the most distinctive features of the modern purse is the way in which many women unthinkingly stash away in it, with absurd yet affectionate loyalty, all the refuse of consumerism: ratty Kleenexes, crumpled drinking-straw wrappers, dead Chap Sticks. The purse preserves an archaic woman whose habits of possessiveness were established in a culture of durable goods immune to obsolescence, things that were meant to be treasured and cared for for an entire life. This quaint Victorian ghost still haunts the modern purse, acting as the overprotective curator of a woman's cherished belongings. Having failed to adapt to a culture of instant trash, she cannot throw away the old hotel-room key given to her several years ago by a friend visiting from out of town nor can she get rid of the moist towelette she acquired at a barbecue in 1988 or the lint-covered cough drop from last season's cold.

Women also hoard such items as broken eyeglass frames, tarnished belt buckles, gloves without mates, pieces of string, extra curtain rings, and shoes with torn straps in the mistaken belief that these things might come in handy at some point in the future. Side by side with the pocketbook's resident survivalist and curator is yet another ghost: the shrewd economizer and conscientious domestic engineer who dutifully tucks away for a rainy day a small arsenal of damaged odds and ends and dilapidated knickknacks. The purse is thus the crash site in which two roles

collide, that of the perfect housewife who finds a use for every pencil stub and broken zipper she encounters and that of the busy professional perpetually on the run, dashing from the dry cleaner to the staff meeting to the day-care center, all the while carting around the raw materials of the ingenious but forever unfinished schemes of a woman she no longer has the time to be.

A strange amnesia comes over women when they review the contents of their purses, an inability to remember why they placed things in an accessory that, in the cases of the most absentminded women, begins to resemble the Freudian unconscious, the psychic realm of forgetfulness in whose darkness objects—like painful memories—are swallowed up. Shaking their heads in disbelief as they sort through their things, they pluck out items they hadn't even realized were there or that they misplaced months ago. The decision to incorporate something into one's permanent collection is often determined less by the needs of the particular individual than by the reflexive and involuntary requirements of archaic social roles. The three abandoned personae that a woman has largely forgotten—the survivalist, the curator, and the homemaker—are holed up in her bag, operating like underground fugitives, leading her to collect things that serve no discernible purpose. Her amnesia is therefore indicative of not just her inability to remember the reason for a particular object but her inability to remember former stages in the evolution of women's roles, which still linger in the purse's collective unconscious like past lives.

**A**lthough most women continue to carry purses, we are in fact entering a period of transition in which these once-mandatory accessories are shriveling up into fanny packs, assuming the unisex disguises of briefcases or book bags, or vanishing completely into the pockets of jackets and blue jeans. The waning of the pocketbook's importance in the modern outfit is the direct outcome of the growing confidence that women below the age of forty feel as self-sufficient and autonomous individuals who no longer need to carry their houses on their backs in order to survive in the public sphere.

Younger women, who often carry pocketbooks to work, use more convenient fanny packs on the weekends or dispense with handbags altogether on a date, when they reduce their possessions to a bare minimum—a credit card, their keys, and some cash, items they stuff into their pockets or carry in small coin purses. This conscious effort to lighten the load when they go out to a party, bar, or restaurant is of course partly the result of the burden the purse imposes on their mobility. But it is not only the physical



ILLUSTRATION BY JIMMY KIMBLE





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burden of the handbag that makes it an unwanted third party on the modern date. It is the mental burden of the purse that the woman leaves behind when she goes out to meet a man—namely, the purse's negative associations with a certain sort of overdressed, uptight, priggish woman who still inhabits the purse in all of her clunky old-maidishness and thus inevitably gets parked right on the table like a boxy lunch pail, where she detracts from the image of youthfulness and hedonism that many women now attempt to project.

Women's sexual and social independence is thus in a certain sense linked in their minds with their independence from their purses, from the respectable world of "home," and from the three weird sisters, the survivalist, the curator, and the homemaker, who, like *Macbeth's* witches, continue to use the purse as a cauldron of spinsterly reservations, taboos, pruderies, and fears.

[Inventory]

## WARHOL'S LATER WORK

*From the official inventory of the contents of one of the 610 "Time Capsules" created by Andy Warhol and stored at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. Beginning in 1974, Warhol regularly created what he called Time Capsules by filling cardboard boxes with letters, clippings, and other material that he acquired; he often kept a box beside his desk as a "Time Capsule in progress." The list below is taken from the inventory of Time Capsule 416, which the artist filled between 1981 and 1984. Warhol died in 1987.*

Letter from John Carmen Public Relations asking Warhol to host Academy Awards event at Limelight, March 14, 1984.

Envelope from Limelight containing party announcement and comp ticket, "Marilyn Monroe's 51st Birthday Party," posted June 8, 1984.

Shoelaces, in plastic box, printed with "Super Heroes": Wonder Woman, Batman, Robin, Batgirl, Superman, Supergirl, Green Lantern, Captain America.

Exhibition announcement, Linda McCartney photographs at Barbara Gillman Gallery of Miami, May 11–June 3, 1984; color photo of Paul McCartney and Willem de Kooning posing with a late-period de Kooning painting.

Five canceled U.S. postage stamps torn from envelopes.

Note, "Thank you for bring [sic] so much pleasure to our world thru your medium. With Admiration [sic]," in ballpoint on torn envelope.

Yellow announcement card, "Joey Arias Presents 'Mermaids in Retail' at Danceteria's Congo Bill," June 21, 1984.

Envelope from Universal Pictures publicity department, posted June 11, 1984, containing press release re: Joe Don Baker starring in *Fleisch*.

Decal, "Push/American Express Cards Welcome," for the glass door of a business.

Small envelope from Miss Chrissie Suleski of Bloomfield, New Jersey, posted June 7, 1984, containing fan letter asking Warhol to help her meet members of rock band Duran Duran.

Invitation to party honoring "Women of the 80s" at The Cat Club, June 14, 1984, stamped "Complimentary Admission for Two."

Party invitation, Senator Christopher Dodd's fortieth birthday.

Envelope posted June 11, 1984, from Auburn, Maine, containing autograph request from teacher Peter James Therrien.

Press release, Eddie Murphy Disease Foundation, re: Eddie Murphy's "homophobia," with inscription, "Andy, this is my chief complaint about doing Eddie Murphy—GL."

Unopened envelope from Manhattan Cable TV, containing bill for services.

Large beige envelope from "Amigos de Julio of Miami," containing folder for Julio Iglesias fan club, with photos and bio information; also membership card, "Andy Warhol, Amigo de Julio."

[Study]

## HUNGRY MINDS

*From "'Gourmand Syndrome': Eating passion associated with right anterior lesions," by Drs. Marianne Regard and Theodor Landis, in the May issue of Neurology, a journal published in Rochester, New York, by the American Academy of Neurology.*

**A**lthough eating disorders are usually accounted for by purely psychological explanations, it has also been shown that neurologic disease can often be associated with pathological eating behavior such as anorexia, bulimia, and obsessive food preferences. We have found another altered eating habit that, in thirty-four of thirty-six patients studied, appears to be a



consequence of cerebral lesions and cannot be classified among known disorders. It is best characterized by the name "gourmand syndrome" and involves a preoccupation with fine food and drink. Two exemplary case studies illustrate this condition.

*Patient 1.* This forty-eight-year-old man was admitted to the hospital after suffering a hemorrhagic infarction in the brain. Prior to his hospitalization, he had been an average eater. He ate what his wife brought to the table and occasionally went to restaurants. He was a well-known local political journalist whose main preoccupation was his work.

During hospitalization, when asked what bothered him most, he instantly replied that the food was awful. He stated that he felt perfectly healthy and that he had nothing else on his mind but a good, tasty meal served in a nice restaurant. He wrote in his diary:

Sex I start to really miss, and it is time for a real hearty dinner—e.g., a good sausage with hash browns or some spaghetti Bolognese, or risotto and a breaded cutlet, nicely decorated, or a scallop of game in cream sauce with spätzle. Always just eat and drink! What a connoisseur I am, and now I am dried up here, just like in the desert. Where is the next oasis? With date trees and lamb roast or couscous and mint tea, the Moroccan way, real fresh...

After four months he was well enough to take up part-time work. But rather than resuming his job as a political journalist, which had been kept open for him, he chose to write columns on eating. He often left home to dine out, and his desire for meals prepared at home became more precise and exotic. His family remarked upon his eating-oriented behavior, which they initially attributed to his new job. Soon, however, they noted that the only conversations that aroused him were about food.

*Patient 2.* This fifty-five-year-old man was admitted with a cerebral hemorrhage. Within a few days, he recovered from slight paralysis to his left side, but his behavior was altered. He made sexual advances to the nurses and ate "goodies," even during examinations.

At home, after five weeks in the hospital, his social behavior was appropriate again, but his family was struck by his "eating passion." Previously, the patient had been a very active businessman and sportsman who was concerned with his looks. He had no real food preferences and preferred a tennis match to a fine dinner. Now his conversation centered around his food fantasies, and he grasped every occasion to dine out. Although he resumed his previous business and sporting activities, he seemed less engaged in them.

When asked to write down his experiences as a patient, he reflected almost exclusively on fine eating:

After I could stand on my feet again, I dreamt to go downtown and sit down in this well-known restaurant. There I would get a beer, sausage, and potatoes. Slowly, my diet improved again and thus did quality of life. The day after discharge, my first trip brought me to this restaurant, and here I order potato salad, sausage, and a beer. I feel wonderful. My spouse anxiously registers everything I eat and nibble. It irritates me. A few steps down the street, we enter a coffee-house. My hand is reaching for pastry, my wife's hand reaches between. Through the window I see my bank. If I choose, I could buy all the pastry I wanted, including the whole store. The creamy pastry slips from the foil like a mermaid. I take a bite.

[Doily]

## HOLD THE PICKLES, HOLD THE LATTICE



"Fast Food Doily," by Aric Obrose. The cut-paper doily, which is 46½ inches in diameter, was on display in June at James Graham & Sons in New York City, where Obrose lives. Obrose's design includes the McDonald's arches, the sunrise from the Diet Pepsi logo, the C's from the Coca-Cola emblem, eight heads of Kentucky Fried Chicken's Colonel Sanders arranged in a rosette, the White Castle hamburger towers, and the figure of a woman commonly depicted on mustard squeeze bottles.



[Lament]

## THE LANGUAGE OF LOST HISTORY

*From "A Guidebook to a Land of Ghosts," by Michael Chabon, in the June/July issue of Civilization. Chabon is the author of the novels The Mysteries of Pittsburgh and Wonder Boys.*

**P**robably the saddest book that I own is a paperback copy of *Say It in Yiddish*, edited by Uriel and Beatrice Weinreich. I bought it new, in 1993, but the book was originally published in 1958. According to the back cover, it's part of the *Say It* book series, with which I'm otherwise unfamiliar. I've never seen *Say It in Swahili*, *Say It in Hindi*, or *Say It in Serbo-Croatian*, nor have I ever been to the countries where any of them might come in handy. As for the country in which I'd do well to carry a copy of *Say It in Yiddish*, naturally I've never been there either. I don't think anyone ever has.

When I first came across *Say It in Yiddish*, on a shelf in a big chain bookstore in Orange County, California, I couldn't quite believe that it was real. There was only one copy, buried in the back of the language section. It was like a book in a story by Borges: unique, inexplicable, possibly a hoax. The first thing that really struck me about it was, paradoxically, its unremarkableness, the conventional terms of its self-promotion. "No other phrase book for travellers," it claimed, "contains all these essential features." It boasted of "over 1,600 up-to-date practical entries" (up-to-date!), "easy pronunciation transcription," and a "sturdy binding—pages will not fall out."

What were they thinking, the Weinreichs? Was the original 1958 edition simply the reprint of some earlier, less heartbreaking implausible book? At what time in the history of the world was there a place of the kind that the Weinreichs imply, a place where not only the doctors and waiters and trolley conductors spoke Yiddish but also the airline clerks, travel agents, and casino employees? A place where you could rent a summer home from Yiddish-speakers, go to a Yiddish movie, have your bridge repaired by a Yiddish-speaking dentist? If, as seems likelier, the book first saw light in 1958, a full ten years after the founding of Israel—which turned its back once and for all on the Yiddish language, condemning its native speakers to a headlong race for extinction with the twentieth century itself—then the tragic dimension of the joke looms larger and makes the Weinreichs' intentions even harder to di-

vine. *Say It in Yiddish* seems an entirely futile effort on the part of its authors, a gesture of embittered hope, of valedictory daydreaming, of a utopian impulse turned cruel and ironic.

The Weinreichs have laid out, in painstakingly categorized numerical entries, the outlines of a world, of a fantastic land, in which it would behoove you to know how to say, in Yiddish:

250. What is the flight number?

1372. I need something for a tourniquet.

1379. Here is my identification.

254. Can I go by boat/ferry to \_\_\_\_?

The blank in the last of those phrases, impossible to fill in, tantalizes me. Whither could I sail on that boat/ferry, in the solicitous company of Uriel and Beatrice Weinreich, and from what shore?

**I** dream of two possible destinations. The first might be a modern independent state very closely analogous to the state of Israel. Call it the state of Yisroel: a postwar Jewish homeland created during a time of moral emergency, located presumably, but not necessarily, in Palestine. Here, perhaps, that minority faction of the Zionist movement that favored the establishment of Yiddish as the national language of the Jews was able to prevail over its more numerous Hebraist opponents. There is Yiddish on the official currency, of which the basic unit is the herzl, or the dollar, or even the zloty. There are Yiddish-speaking color commentators for soccer games, Yiddish-speaking cash machines, Yiddish tags on the collars of dogs.

I can't help thinking that such a nation, speaking its essentially European tongue, would, in the Middle East, stick out among its neighbors to an even greater degree than Israel does now. But would the Jews of a Mediterranean Yisroel be impugned and admired for having the kind of character that Israelis, rightly or wrongly, are taken to have, the classic sabra personality: rude, hardheaded, cagey, pushy? Is it living in a near-permanent state of war, or is it the Hebrew language that has made Israeli humor so barbed, so cynical, so untranslatable?

I can imagine a different Yisroel, the youngest nation on the North American continent, founded in the former Alaska territory during World War II as a resettlement zone for the Jews of Europe. (I once read that Franklin Roosevelt was briefly sold on such a plan.) Perhaps after the war, in this Yisroel, the millions of immigrant Polish, Romanian, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Austrian, Czech, and German Jews held a referendum, and chose independence over proffered statehood in the United States. The resulting country is a cold, northern land





*Bridge City, Louisiana," by Mitch Epstein. His work is currently on display at Wooster Gardens in New York City, where Epstein lives.*

of furs, paprika, samovars, and one long, glorious day of summer. It would be absurd to speak

Hebrew, that tongue of spikenard and almonds, in such a place.

**T**hese countries of the Weinreichs are in the nature of a wistful toy theater, with miniature sets and furnishings to arrange and rearrange, all their grief concealed behind the scrim, hidden in the machinery of the loft, sealed up beneath trapdoors in the floorboards. But grief haunts every mile of the places to which the Weinreichs beckon. Grief hand-colors all the postcards, stamps the passports, sours the cooking, fills the luggage. It keens all night in the pipes of old hotels. By taking us to Yisroel, the Weinreichs are, in effect, taking us home, to the "old country." To a Europe that might have been.

In this Europe the millions of Jews who were never killed produced grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. The countryside retains large Yiddish-speaking pockets, and in the cities there are many more for whom Yiddish is the language of kitchen and family, of theater and poetry and scholarship. A surprisingly large number of these people are my relations. I can go visit

them, the way Irish-Americans I know are always visiting second and third cousins in Galway or Cork, sleeping in their strange beds, eating their strange food, and looking just like them. Imagine. Perhaps one of my cousins might take me to visit the house where my father's mother was born, or to the school in Vilna that my grandfather's grandfather attended. For my relatives, although they will doubtless know at least some English, I will want to trot out a few appropriate Yiddish phrases, more than anything as a way of reestablishing the tenuous connection between us. In this world Yiddish is not, as it is in ours, a tin can with no tin can on the other end of the string.

What is this Europe like, with its twenty-five, thirty, or thirty-five million Jews? Are they tolerated, despised, ignored by, or merely indistinguishable from their fellow modern Europeans? What is the world like, never having felt the need to create an Israel, that hard bit of grit in the socket that hinges Africa to Asia?

What phrases would I need to know in order to speak to these millions of unborn phantoms to whom I belong?

Just what am I supposed to do with this book? ■





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# DRIVING MR. ALBERT

A TRIP ACROSS AMERICA WITH  
EINSTEIN'S BRAIN

BY MICHAEL PATERNITI

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.  
FEBRUARY 17, 1997.

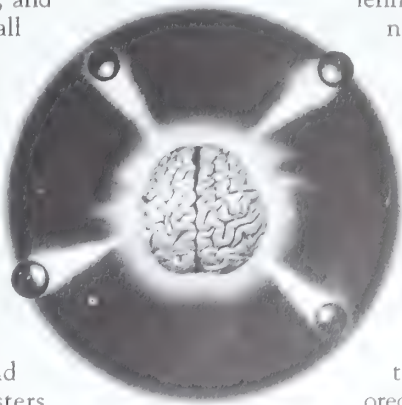
**I**n the beginning, there was a brain. All of the universe was the size of this brain, floating in space. Until one day it simply exploded. Out poured photons and quarks and leptons. Out flew dust particles like millions of fast-moving birds into the expanding aviary of the cosmos. Cooked heavy elements—silicon, magnesium, and nickel—were sucked into a small pocket and balled together under great pressure and morphed with the organic matter of our solar system. Lo, the planets!

Our world—Earth—was covered with lava, then granite mountains. Oceans formed, a wormy thing crawled from the sea. There were pea-brained brontosauri and fiery meteor showers and gnawing, hairy-backed monsters that kept coming and coming—these furious little stumps, human beings, us. Under the hot sun, we roasted different colors, fornicated, and fought. Full of wonder, we attached words to the sky and the mountains and the water, and claimed them as our own. We named ourselves Homer, Sappho, Humper-

dinck, and Nixon. We made bewitching sonatas and novels and paintings. Stargazed and built great cities. Exterminated some people. Settled the West. Cooked meat and slathered it with special sauce. Did the hustle. Built the strip mall.

And in the end, after billions of years of evolution, a pink two-story motel rose up on a drag of asphalt in Berkeley, California. The Flamingo Motel. There, a man stepped out onto the balcony in a bright beam of millennial sunlight, holding the original universe in his hands, in a Tupperware container, and for one flickering moment he saw into the future. I can picture this man now: he needs a haircut, he needs some coffee.

But not yet, not before we rewind and start again. Not long ago. In Maine on a bus. In Massachusetts on a train. In Connecticut behind the wheel of a shiny, teal-colored rental car. The engine purrs. I should know, I'm the driver. I'm on my way to pick up an eighty-four-year-old man named Thomas Harvey, who lives in a modest, low-slung 1950s ranch that belongs to his sixty-seven-year-old girlfriend, Cleora. To get there you caroom through New Jersey's exurbia, through swirls of dead leaves and unruly thick-



*Michael Paterniti lives in Portland, Maine. He is at work on a novel.*



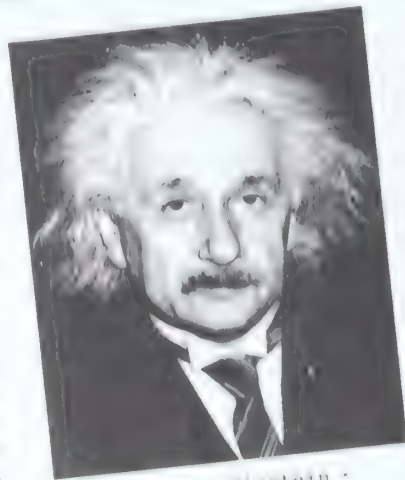
ets of odd and pine that give way to well-ordered fields of peas, buttermilk, and black-morning grain—horses. Harvey greets me at the door, stooped and chattering nervously, wearing a red and white plaid shirt and a solid blue Pendleton tie that still bears a waterlogged \$10 price tag from some earlier decade. He has peckled, blowy hair turned white with time, an orange nose, rubbed yellow teeth, bitten nails, and a spray of white hair as fine as corn silk that drifts with the wind over the bald patches on his head. He could be one of a million beach-bound, black-soaked Florida retirees, not the man who, by some odd happenstance of life, possesses the brain of Albert Einstein—literally cut it out of the dead scientist's head.

Harvey has stoked a fire in the basement, which is dark and dark, and I sit among crocheted rings and game bottles of blown glass, Ethiopian cookbooks, and macramé. It has taken me more than a year to find Harvey, and during that time I've had a dim, inchoate feeling—one that has increased in luminosity—that if I could somehow reach him and Einstein's brain, I might unravel their strange relationship, one that arcs across this century and America itself. And now, before the future arrives and the supercomputers of the world spit out and we move to lunar colonies—before all that hullabaloo—Harvey and I are finally sitting here together.

That day Harvey tells me the story he's told before—to friends and family and pilgrims—one that has made him an odd celebrity even in this age of odd celebrity. He tells it deliberately, assuming that I will be impressed by it as a testament to the rightness of his actions rather than as a cogent defense of them. "You see," he says, "I was just so fortunate to have been there. Just so lucky."

"Fortunate" is one word, "improbable" is another. Albert Einstein was born in 1879 with a head shaped like a lopsided medicine ball. Seeing it for the first time, his grandmother fell into shock. "Much too fat!" she exclaimed. "Much too fat!" He didn't speak until he was three, and it was generally assumed that he was brain damaged. Even as a child, he lived mostly in his mind, building intricate card houses, marveling at a compass his father showed him. His faith was less in people than in the future of the world. When his sister Maja was born, young Albert, crestfallen, said, "Yes, but where are its wheels?"

As a man, he grew into a powerful body with thick arms and legs. He liked to hike and hunt, spent most of his life sitting still, dreaming of the universe. In 1905, as a twenty-six-year patent clerk in Bern, Switzerland, he conceived of the special theory of relativity and the even more radical supposition that all matter, from feathers to a rock, contains energy. And with theories that predicted the origin, nature, and destiny of the universe, he toppled Newton, nearly three hundred years of science. When the first glimmer of relativity occurred to him, he usually told a friend, "Thank you. I've completely solved the problem."



• Albert Einstein •

So complex were his findings that they could hardly be partially understood and verified fourteen years later. Then, of course, Albert Einstein instantly became famous. His mischievous smile beamed from newspapers around the world. A genius! Nobel Prize! A guru! A mystic who had unlocked the secrets of God's own mind! There were suddenly hundreds of books on relativity. Einstein embarked on a frenzied world tour, was feted by kings and

emperors and presidents.

gamboling into the world's most sacred halls, a sockless state of bemused dishevelment. He claimed he got his hairstyle—eventually a white electric-white nimbus—"through negligence" and, explaining his overall sloppiness, said, "It would be a sad situation if the wrapper were better than the meat wrapped inside it." He laughed like a barking seal, snored like a foghorn, sunbathed in the nude. And then he took tea with the queen.

Everywhere, it was Einstein mania. People named their children after him, fawned and fainted upon seeing him, wrote letters inquiring if he really existed. He was asked to "perform" at London's Palladium for three weeks on the same bill as fire-eaters and tightrope walkers, explaining his theory, at the price of his asking. "At the Chrysanthemum Festival," wrote one German diplomat stationed in Japan, "it was neither the empress nor the prince regent nor the imperial princes who held reception; everything turned around Einstein." A copy of the special theory of relativity in Einstein's scrawl was auctioned for \$6 million. And the *New York Times* urged its readers not to be offended by



ct that only twelve people in the world truly understood the theory of "the suddenly famous Dr. Einstein."

In the years to follow, Einstein's fame would only grow. He would vehemently criticize the Nazis and become a target for German ultra-nationalists, who waited outside his home and office, hurling anti-Semitic obscenities at him. When they made him a target for assassination, he fled to the United States—to Princeton, New Jersey—and became an American citizen. He was called the new Columbus of science."

David Ben-Gurion offered him the presidency of Israel (to everyone's relief, he declined). His political utterances were as good as Gandhi's. Before Michael Jordan was beamed by satellite from China, before Marilyn Monroe and the Beatles and Arnold Schwarzenegger, Albert Einstein was the first transglobal supercelebrity.

In the last years of his life, he was struck with frequent attacks of nausea, the pain flowing between his shoulder blades, culminating in diarrhea or vomiting. An exam revealed an aneurysm in his abdominal aorta, but Einstein refused an operation and anticipated his own demise. "I want to be cremated so people won't come to worship at my bones," he said. On the night before he died, April 17, 1955, lying in bed in Princeton Hospital, Einstein asked to see his most recent pages of calculations, typically working until the end. His last words were spoken in German to a nurse who didn't know the language, though sometime earlier he had told a friend, "I have finished my task here."

The next morning, April 18, when the chief pathologist of the hospital—our Harvey, then a rapping forty-two-year-old with Montgomery lift good looks—arrived for work, Einstein's body was laid out, naked and mottle-skinned, on a gurney. "Imagine my surprise," Harvey says to me now. "A fellow up in New York, my former teacher Dr. Zimmerman"—and an acquaintance of Einstein's—"was going to do the autopsy. But then he couldn't get away. He rang me up, and we agreed that I'd do it." Harvey says that he felt awe when he came face-to-face with the world-famous physicist, the voice of conscience in a century of madness, who had bewildered the world by suggesting that time could be understood as the fourth, and inseparable, dimension. Now he lay alone in the pale light, 180 pounds of mere matter.

Harvey took a scalpel in his hand and sliced Einstein open with a Y incision, scoring the skin, the skin giving like cellophane, then cut the rib cartilage and lifted the sternum. He found nearly three quarts of blood in Einstein's

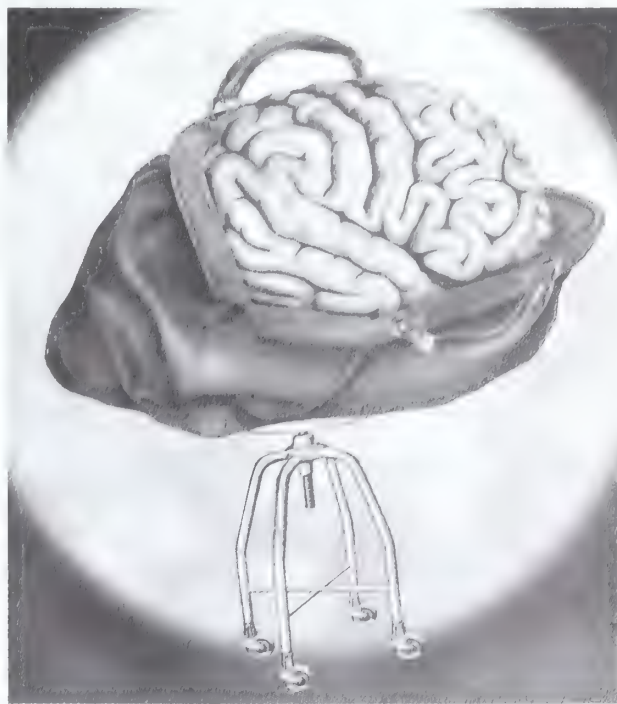
peritoneal cavity, a result of the burst aneurysm, and after investigating his heart and veins concluded that, with an operation, the physicist might have lived for several more years, though how long was hard to tell "be-

Who's to say what inspired Harvey to remove Einstein's brain—greed or beneficence, pettiness or awe?

cause Einstein liked his fatty foods," in particular goose scratchings.

Working under the humming lights, his fingers inside Einstein's opened body, juggling the liver, palpating the heart, Harvey made a decision. Who's to say whether it was inspired by awe or by greed, beneficence or mere pettiness? Who's to say what comes over a mortal, what chemical reaction takes place deep in the thalamus, when faced with the blinding brightness of another's greatness and, with it, a knowledge that I/you/we shall never possess even a cheeseparer of that greatness?

Working quickly with a knife, Harvey tonsured the scalp, peeled the skin back, and, bearing down on a saw, cut through Einstein's head with a quick, hacking motion. He removed a cap of bone, peeled back the meninges, then clipped blood vessels and bundles of nerve and





the spinal cord. He reached with his fingers deeper into the chalice of the man's cranium and simply removed the glistening brain. *To keep for himself. Forever. In perpetuity. Amen.*

What he didn't count on, however, was that with this one act his whole world would go haywire. Apparently, word got out through Zimmerman that Harvey had the brain, and when it was reported in the *New York Times* a day later, some people were aghast. Einstein's son, Hans Albert, reportedly felt betrayed. Harvey claimed that he was planning to conduct medical research on the brain, and, in an agreement eventually struck with Hans Albert over the phone, he assured that the brain would only be the subject of medical journals and not become a pop-cultural gewgaw, as the Einsteins most feared. Sometime after the autopsy, Harvey was fired from his job for refusing to give up the brain.

From a dark room in a secret location, Harvey retrieves two glass jars that are filled with Einstein's brain

Years passed, and there were no papers, no findings. And then Harvey fell off the radar screen. When he gave an occasional interview—in articles from 1956 and 1979 and 1988—he always repeated that he was about “a year away from finishing study on the specimen.”<sup>1</sup>

Forty years later—after Harvey has gone through three wives, after he has sunk to lesser circumstances, after he has outlived most of his critics and accusers, including Hans Albert—we are sitting together before a hot fire on a cold winter day. And because I like him so much, because somewhere in his watery blue eyes, his genial stumble-footing, and that ineffable cloak of hunched integrity that falls over the old, I find myself feeling for him and cannot bring myself to ask the essential questions:

Is Harvey a grave-robbing thief or a hero? A sham artist or a high priest? Why not heist a finger or a toe? Or a simple earlobe? What about rumors that he plans to sell Einstein's brain to Michael Jackson for \$2 million? Does he feel ashamed? Or justified? If the brain is the

<sup>1</sup> According to newspaper accounts following Einstein's death, mystery immediately shrouded the brain. Dr. Zimmerman, on staff at New York City's Montefiore Medical Center, expected to receive Einstein's brain from Harvey, but never, in fact, did; Princeton Hospital decided not to relinquish the brain. Harvey, however, also decided not to relinquish the brain and at some point removed it from the hospital.

ultimate Fabergé egg, the Hope diamond, the Cantino map, the One-Penny Magenta stamp, “Guernica,” what does it look like? Feel like? Smell like? Does he talk to it as one talks to one's poodle or ferns?

We conclude the visit by going out for sushi and over the course of our conversation he mentions a handful of people he hopes to see out America before he dies. “Yessir, I'd really like to visit some folks,” he says. They include a neuroanatomists with whom he has brain business, some friends, and, in Berkeley, Evelyn Einstein, Hans Albert's daughter and the granddaughter of Albert. Harvey has wanted to mother her for many years. Although he doesn't know why, I think he might be trying to face down some lingering guilt, some late-in-life desire to resolve the past before his age grounds him permanently and, with his death, the brain falls

to someone else's hands. Perhaps, too, he wants to make arrangements for someone to take over the brain, and Evelyn is going to be interviewed for the job. Whatever the reason, by the meal's end, doped by the incessant tinkling of piped-in harps and a heady shot of tekka riki, Harvey and I have somehow agreed to take a road trip: I will drive

him to California.

And then, one afternoon soon before our departure, Harvey takes me to a secret location where one he asks me not to reveal for fear of thieves and rambunctious pilgrims—where he now keeps the brain. From a dark room he retrieves a box that contains two glass jars full of Einstein's brain. After the autopsy, he had chopped into nearly two hundred pieces—fine as the size of a dime to that of a thick turkey neck—and since then he has given nearly a third of it away to various people. He flashes the jars before me but only for a second, then treats quickly with them. The brain pieces float in murky formaldehyde, leaving an impression of very chunky chicken soup. But it happens so quickly, Harvey so suddenly absconds with the brain, that I have no real idea what I've seen.

When I show up at his house a few weeks later in a rented Buick Skylark, Harvey has apparently fished several fistfuls' worth of brain matter from the jars, put them in Tupperware filled with formaldehyde, and zipped it all inside a gray duffel bag. He meets me in the driveway with a plaid suitcase rimmed with fake leather and the gray duffel sagging heavily in his right hand. He pecks Cleora good-bye. “He's a fine Quaker gentleman,” she tells me, watching Harvey's curled-over self shuffle across the pavement. He rubs a smudge of mud off my side mirror, then toodles around



ont of the car. When he's fallen into the passenger seat, he chuckles nervously, scratchily ears his throat, and utters what will become s mantra, "Yessir . . . real good." And then we st start driving. For four thousand miles. Me, arvey, and, in the trunk, Einstein's brain.

## TOWARD COLUMBUS, OHIO. FEBRUARY 18, 1997.

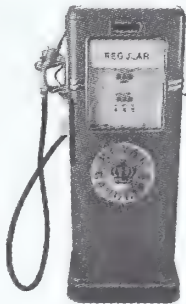
**N**e morph as one. Even if we are more than a half century apart in age, he born under the star of William Howard Taft and I under the napalm bomb of Lyndon B. Johnson, if he wears black Wallabees and I sport Oakley sunglasses, if he has three wives, ten children, and twelve grandchildren and I have yet to procreate, we begin to link together, to make unconscious team decisions. It seems the entire backseat area will serve as a kind of trash can. By the time we make Wheeling, West Virginia, it's already strewn with books and tissuey green papers from the rental-car agreement, snack wrappers, and empty bottles of seltzer, a hedge against B.I. upset," as Harvey puts it. An old rambler of heart, he takes to the road like it's a river of brandy, seems to grow stronger on its oily fumes and oily-rainbow mirages, its oily fast food and the oily-tarmacked gas plazas that we ate across for candy bars and Coca-Colas while the Skylark feeds at the pump. By default, I take charge of the radio—working the dial in a schizophrenic riffle from PR to Dr. Laura and, in between, all kinds of high school basketball, gardening shows, local on-air auctions, blathering DJs, farm reports, and Christian call-in shows. Harvey has a hard-of-hearing in his right ear and, perhaps out of pride or vanity, refuses to wear a hearing aid, so I've bought tapes too, figuring he might get a fair amount of sleeping while, as designated driver, I might do more staying awake. I've got bands with names like Dinosaur Jr., Soul Dugging, and Pavement, and a book-on-tape, *Neuromancer*, by William Gibson. Harvey himself is partial to classical music and reads most scientific journals and novels by Kay Boyle. And although we are now bound by the road—Einstein's brain, Harvey, and me—he studiously avoids all discussion of the brain. Earlier, however, he ticked off twelve different researchers to whom he had given slices of the brain. According to Harvey, one of them, Sandra Witelson from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, organized his ephemera and articles on the brain into a scrapbook, and he

turned over nearly a fifth of the brain to her. "She has one of the biggest collections of brains around," he says, proudly. "She gets them from a local undertaker." (Later, when contacted, Witelson said that Harvey's assertions about her were "incorrect.")

In most cases, Harvey has made it sound as if he himself handpicked these people after reading their work, though by some of their own admissions, a number of them had contacted him first. One neuroanatomist, a Berkeley professor named Marian Diamond, had written a paper claiming that she had counted in Einstein's brain a higher than normal number of glial cells, which nourish the organ. The only other paper written to date, by a researcher at the University of Alabama named Britt Anderson, stated that Einstein had a thinner cortex than normal. "You see," says Harvey enthusiastically, "we're finding out that Einstein's brain is more unusual than many people first thought." But a professor of neurobiology at UCLA, Larry Kruger, calls the "meagre findings" on the brain "laughable" and says that when Diamond herself delivered her paper, the audience found it "comical," because "it means absolutely nothing." (When I asked Diamond, a woman with impeccable credentials, about this, she claimed that Kruger had "a lack of inhibitor cells" and said, "Well, we have to start somewhere, don't we?")

Despite my expectations that Harvey will sleep a good deal, what I soon realize is that he's damn perky for eighty-four and never sleeps at all. Nor talks much. In this age of self-revelation, he eschews the orotundity of a confessor. He speaks in a clipped, spare, almost penurious way—with a barely perceptible drawl from his midwestern childhood—letting huge blocks of time fall in between the subject and the verb, and then between the verb and the modifier of a sentence. He pronounces "pleasure" *play-sure*, and "measurements" *may-sure-mints*. When my line of questioning makes him uncomfortable, he chuckles flatly like two chops of wood, "Heh-heh," raspiely clears his throat, then says, "Way-ell . . ." And just steps aside to let some more time pass, returning to his map, which he studies like it's a rune. Through the window he watches Pennsylvania pass by: its barns and elaborate hexes, signs for Amish goods, the Allegheny Mountains rising like dark whales out of the earth, lost behind the mist of some unseen blowhole. He watches Ohio all pan-flattened and thrown back down on itself. And he blinks languidly at it. But never sleeps.

I admit: this disappoints me. Something in me wants Harvey to sleep. I want Harvey to





fall into a deep, blurry, Rip Van Winkle daze, and I want to park the Skylark mothership on top of a mountain and walk around to the trunk and open it. I want Harvey snoring loudly as I unzip the duffel bag and reach my hands inside, and I want to—what?—touch Einstein's brain. I want to touch the brain. Yes, I've said it. I want to hold it, cuddle it, measure its weight in my palm, handle some of its 15 billion now-dormant neurons. Does it feel like to-fu, sea urchin, baloney? What, exactly? And what does such a desire make me? One of the

Even today, we regard Einstein as supernatural. He, alone, held the seashell of the century to his ear

legion of relic freaks who send Harvey letters asking, sometimes begging, for pieces of the brain? One of the pilgrims who come from as far away as Japan or England or Australia to glimpse it?

For Harvey's sake, I act like I haven't given the brain a second thought, while he encourages stultifying state-long silences and offers the occasional historical anecdote. "Eisenhower's farm was in these parts, I believe." Or, "In the days of the canal . . ." The more the idea persists in my head, the more towns slip past outside the window, the more I wonder what, in fact, I'd really be holding if I held the brain. I mean, it's not really Einstein and it's not really a brain but disconnected pieces of a brain, just as the passing farms are not *really* America but parts of a whole, symbols of the thing itself, which is everything and nothing at once.

In part, I would be touching Einstein the Superstar, immediately recognizable by his Krameresque hair and the both-at-once mournful and mirthful eyes. The man whose apotheosis is so complete that he's now a coffee mug, a postcard, a T-shirt. The face zooming out of a pop rock video on MTV's 'Buzz Clip for a song called "MMMBop." A figure of speech, an ad pitchman. The voice of reason on posters festooning undergrad dorm rooms. Despite the fact that he was a sixty-one-year-old man when he was naturalized as an American citizen, Einstein has been fully appropriated by this country, by our writers and moralists, politicians and scientists, cult leaders and clergy. In the *fin-de-siècle* shadows of America, in our antsy, searching times, Einstein comes back to us both as Lear's fool and Tiresias, comically offering his uncanny vision

of the future while cautioning us against violence that lurks in the heart of man. "I do not know how the Third World War will be fought," he warned, "but I do know how it will end: Fourth will: with sticks and stones."

To complete his American deification, Einstein has been fully commodified and marketed, earning millions of dollars for his estate. Bought and sold back to us by the foot soldiers of late capitalism, Einstein's name and image are conjured to sell computers and CD-ROMs, Nike cameras and myriad baubles. In fact, a

Angeles celebrity-licensing agency handles his account.

But why so much commotion over a guy with sweaty feet and rumpled clothes? The answer is perhaps found in a feeling that Einstein is not one of us. It seems we regard him as being supernatural. Because he glimpsed into the very workings of the universe and returned with

God on his tongue, because he greeted this by rocketing into the next with his breakthrough theories, he assumed a mien of supernaturalism. And because his tatterdemalion times dotty, demeanor stood in such stark contrast to his supernaturalism, he seemed both innocent and trustworthy and thus that more supernatural. He, alone, held the seashell of the century to his ear.

Einstein is also one of the few figures born in the last century whose ideas are equally relevant to us today. If we've incorporated the theory of relativity into our scientific view of the universe, it's Einstein's attempt to devise a kind of personal religion—an intimate spiritual and political manifesto—that still stands in stark, almost sacred contrast to the Pecksniffian systems of salvation offered by the modern world. Depending on the day's sex crimes and senseless murders, the intensity of our millennial migraine, we face the real risk of feeling straitjacketed and sacrificed to everything from organized religion to the nuclear blood lust of nations to the cultionaries of our world and their various vodka-and-cuckoo schemes, their Hale-Bopp fantasies.

Thus Einstein's blending of twentieth-century skepticism with nineteenth-century romanticism offers a kind of modern hope. "I am a deeply religious nonbeliever," he said. "This is a somewhat new kind of religion." Pushing further, he sought to marry science and religion, redefining their terms. "I am of the opinion that all the finer speculations in the realm of science spring from a deep religious feeling," he said. "I also believe that this kind of religiousness . . . is the only creative religious activity of our time."

To touch Einstein's brain would also be to touch the white dwarf and the black hole, the



...Bang and ghost waves. To ride a ray of light, Einstein once dreamed it as a child, into utter oblivion. He imagined that a clock placed on the equator would run more slowly than a clock placed at one of the poles under identical conditions. Einstein claimed that the happiest thought of his life came to him in 1907, at the Patent Office in Bern, when he was twenty-eight and couldn't find a teaching job. Up to his ears in a worsted wool suit and patent applications, a voice in his mind whispered, "If a person is freely, he won't feel his own weight." That came the general theory of relativity. His life's ideas continue to fill thousands of books; even today, scientists are still verifying his work. Recently, a NASA satellite took millions of measurements in space that proved a uniform

"Is what safe?" Harvey asks back, gelid eyes sparking once in the dark. He doesn't seem to know or remember. He's carried the contraband for so long he has come to consider himself something of a celebrity. No longer defined by the specimen, *he* has become the real specimen. A piece of living history. On tour. In his glen-plaid suitcase, he carries postcards of himself.

Inside his motel room with the brain, Harvey gathers the sleep of the old. Next door I am exhausted yet wide awake. I am thinking of the brain, remembering that after more than 8 million people had marched to their deaths in the fields of Europe during World War I, Einstein's theory of relativity allowed humanity, in the words of a colleague, to look up from an "earth covered with graves and blood to the heavens



...tribution of primordial temperatures just above absolute zero; that is, the data proved that the universe was in a kind of postcoital afterglow from the Big Bang, further confirming Einstein's explanation for how the universe began. It would be good to touch that. We disembark that first night at a Best Western in Columbus, Ohio. As we open the trunk to gather our bags, I watch Harvey take what he needs, then leave the gray duffel there, the zip-shining like silver teeth in the streetlight. "Is it safe?" I ask, nodding my head toward the duffel.

covered with the stars." He suddenly appeared on the world's doorstep, inspiring pan-national awe and offering with it pan-national reconciliation—a liberal German Jew who clung to his Swiss citizenship and renounced violence. What better way to absolve oneself of all sins than to follow a blameless scientist up into the glimmering waters of time and space?

Another contemporary of Einstein's, Erwin Schrödinger, claimed that Einstein's theory of relativity quite simply meant "the dethronement of time as a rigid tyrant," opening up the possibility that there might be an alternative



Master Plan. "And this thought," he wrote, "is a religious thought, nay I should call it the religious thought." With relativity, Einstein, the original cosmic slacker, was himself touching the mind of a new god, forming a conga line to immortality through some wrinkle in time. "It is quite possible that we can do greater things than Jesus," he said.

That, finally, was Einstein's ultimate power and hold on our imagination. Eternity—it would be good to touch *that* too.

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI.  
FEBRUARY 19, 1997.

**A**cross Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, beneath scudding clouds and clear shots of sunlight, the chill air fragrant with manure and feed. We pass over the chocolate, moiling Mississippi, drive near the towns of Emma, Bellflower, Peruque, and Auxvasse. We stealth through shadows thrown by crop dusters and Greyhound buses, up against wobbling 53-foot truck trailers full of movie videos or broccoli or industrial turbines and, at one point, a flatbed with a Vietnam-era helicopter strapped to it. On this bright, windy day, we see the outbuildings and barns of the Midwest, where farmers stand in small circles eyeing their fields like nervous, hand-wringing fathers, repairing their threshers, turning the first soil, pointing to what's yet invisible, speaking in incantations: feed and fertilizer, moisture content and till depth. With each day's work, with each field-side conference and hour alone in the air-conditioned cab of a supertractor, they will silently appeal to the circadian rhythms of some higher power for a perfect calibration of sun and rain, as well as for the perfect ascension of market prices to deliver a bountiful harvest. On the radio, we get the farm reports: lean hog futures down five-eighths; feeder cattle futures up a half. Corn futures and soybean and cocoa, up two-eighths, down a third, even. January sugar and March corn; September rice and December cotton—all of them attached to a momentary price that may right now be making someone rich as it bankrupts someone else.

"Look at that cow!" exclaims Harvey.

And it is quite a cow! On this, our third day together, something is beginning to happen out here between us, the three of us. Time is slowing, it seems, or expanding to fill a bigger sky, a more open landscape. The got-to-be-there self-importance of the East, its frantic floodlight charge, has given way to a single lit parlor lamp. And under it, a cow or one silver tree in the wind or the rusted remains of an old tiller seems

more holy, even mythic. It's not that the Midwest lacks bustle; it's just that away from cities, the deadlines are imposed by the earth and its seasons. I slip off my watch and feel myself beginning to slow into Harvey time.

We are, in fact, retracing Harvey's road when he came west from New Jersey in the 1960s, after eluding those who themselves sired the brain. Within weeks of Einstein's death, after it was reported that the brain had been taken from the body, a group of leading brain researchers met in Washington, D.C. It was an august, winning collection of men: Directors Webb Haymaker and Hartwig Kuhlenbeck, Clem Fox and Gerhardt von Bonin, J. E. Rose and Walle Nauta. And necessarily among them, but perhaps regarded with a touch of condescension, this slightly awkward, obviously chuckling half-doctor, this Irregular Sock, this pathologist from a small-town hospital connected only by the same name to hallowed halls and elite eating clubs of Princeton University. When Webb Haymaker, who represented the U.S. Army, demanded the brain, Harvey simply refused to hand it over.

Heh-heh. When Haymaker got angry, Harvey didn't budge. And now who laughs last? Who's doing each last one of them, and who's out here busting for California with the brain, inhaling Fritos and baked potatoes, Hoover's and Denny's pancakes and green

ads and chicken noodle soup?

"Harvey didn't know his ass from his elbow from the brain," says Larry Kruger, who at the time was a postdoctoral fellow with Jerzy Fiedorowicz at Johns Hopkins. "Harvey refused to give up the brain even though he wasn't a neuropathologist, and then all bets were off. I mean, what were you going to do with it anyway? I heard he kept it in his basement. He would show it to visitors. I guess some people would show off a rare edition of Shakespeare. He would say, 'Hey, wanna see Einstein's brain?' The guy's a jerk. . . . He wanted fame and money and came of it."<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Harvey bristles at such suggestions, regards himself as destiny's chosen one, the man who forever belongs with Einstein's brain, for better or for worse. In a way, it's a tale of obsessive love: Humbert Humbert



<sup>2</sup> Later, when I visit Kruger in Los Angeles, among the clutter of his office, which includes an oversize book entitled *Pendro cyto myeloarchitectonic Atlas of the Cerebral Cortex*, he's a bit more judicious. "What [Harvey] did is probably illegal," he tells me. "I guess he must be a slightly strange guy. . . . Had he been smart, he would have given it up and moved away from it, but he was grandstanding and I presume he paid a price for it."



Lolita. But Harvey sees it more prosaically: up, I was just so fortunate to be the one to talk in the room that morning," he repeats again and again. Prior to that April morning in 1955, Harvey's life hardly augured greatness as much as stolid servitude and an abiding curiosity in science. He had met Einstein only once, to take blood from him, and, expecting his usual nurse for such a menial chore, the ever-lustful scientist saw Harvey and blurted, "You've changed your sex!" Summing up his years as a neurologist, Harvey says, "It was great to try to figure out what killed someone."

Sawed-off statements like these initially make it easy to, well, feel underwhelmed by Harvey. In part, it is simply a maker's modesty, a respectful reticence, beneath which glimmers a diamond-sharp, at times even menacing man who has survived over four decades with the brain. Harvey grew up in a Kentucky home of dyed-in-the-wool Quakers, then moved to Hartford, Connecticut, when his father got a good job with an insurance firm. Later, he attended Yale, where he contracted tuberculosis, spent over a year in a sanatorium, and when he returned, gave up his dreams of doctoring and turned to pathology because "the doctors were less demanding." He lists that year's sickness and the later revocation of his medical license as among the greatest disappointments of his life. Did he pay a price for his brain? Perhaps. He was soon fired from his job at the hospital and divorced from his first wife. In the next years he drifted through jobs at state psychiatric hospitals and medical labs, another wife, and then picked up and moved west to start a general practice in Weston, Missouri, which eventually folded. Later, he lost his medical license after failing a three-part test and was forced to work the late shift as an extruder at a plastics factory in Lawrence, Kansas. All of it after the brain, perhaps because of the brain.

Nonetheless, a life isn't one paragraph long, and we might also consider Harvey a happy man, with each move maybe feeling himself to move on to the next adventure, with each wife and child perhaps feeling himself loved. Still, I can picture him standing before Einstein's statue—in that one naked moment.

Only occasionally can you glimpse through the embrasures of an otherwise perfectly polite person to see the cannons aimed out, only in a faint glint of light do the eyeteeth become fangs. We are driven by desire and fear. Only in our solitary hungers do we find ourselves capable of the most magnificently unexpected sins.

LAWRENCE, KANSAS.  
FEBRUARY 20, 1997.

In the heart of America, a psychic vortex. We cruise through a neighborhood of picket fences and leafless trees, parking before a small red house, a four-room Sears Roebuck with bookcases of paperback horror fiction and wax skulls. Here lives Harvey's former neighbor, the soon-to-be-late novelist William S. Burroughs. Shuffling across the front porch, Harvey clasps his hand, enunciating loudly, believing that the eighty-three-year-old Burroughs is equally deaf, which he isn't, then

Harvey's critics are all dead now, and who's out here busting for California with the brain, inhaling Frostees?

climbs up his arm until they are in a startled embrace, the two of them as pale as the marble of a Rodin sculpture. "REAL, REAL GOOD TO SEE YA!" Later, Harvey quaffs glasses of burgundy until he turns bright red; Burroughs, himself a bowed and hollowed cult hero and keeper of the Secret—his cheeks dimpled as if by the tip of a blade, a handgun in a holster over his kidney—drinks five Coke and vodkas after taking his daily dose of methadone.

"Have you ever tried morphine, Doctor?" he asks Harvey.

"NO, NO, I HAVEN'T," yells Harvey earnestly.

"Unbelievable. In Tangiers, there was a most magnificent, most significant drug . . . went there just to have the last of it. Last there ever was. Tell me about your addictions, Doctor."

"WELL, HEH-HEH . . ." But then Harvey keeps quiet about the brain.

Burroughs lights a joint and offers it to Harvey, who demurs, smoke swirling around his head like a wreath of steam from a Turkish bath.

"DID YOU BECOME ADDICTED BECAUSE YOU FELT PAIN?"

"I wish I could say that, Doctor, but no," says Burroughs, considering. "I became addicted because I wanted more."

Later, when the two soused men face each other for a good-bye on the tippy front porch—for no apparent reason, Burroughs now calls him Dr. Senegal—the writer lowers his voice and delivers a farewell chestnut, one that Harvey receives with a knowing nod, though it isn't clear he actually hears it.



"What keeps the old alive, Dr. Senegal," advises Burroughs, "is that we learn to be evil."

And then we are out in the night, in a downpour, Harvey trundling toward the car for

When one drives long enough with  
Einstein's brain in the trunk, time  
bends and accelerates and overlaps

what feels like a small eternity. Behind him Burroughs sways, curling and unfurling his arms like elephant trunks, then assumes a position of Buddhist prayer—pale, delirious, still.

TOWARD DODGE CITY, KANSAS.

FEBRUARY 21, 1997.

**W**e wake in Lawrence to a nuclear-powered snow, driving horizontally, starting the windows with ice, piling up until the Skylark looks like a soap-flake duck float in a Memorial Day parade gone terribly wrong. Everything is suddenly heaped in the frigid no-smell of winter, cars skidding, then running off roadsides into gulleys. The snow falls in thick sheaves, icicles jag the gutters. It feels like Lawrence is going back to a day, 500,000 years ago, when it was buried under hundreds of feet of ice.

We take shelter in our adjoining rooms at the Westminster Inn, are slow to rise. When we do, Harvey is bright-eyed and spunky as we find the good people of Kansas doing what they do in a blizzard: eating pancakes. The Village Inn Pancake House Restaurant is packed: college students and retirees, all flannel-shirted, how-are-ya's ricocheting everywhere, steak-and-egg specials zooming by on super-white plates. Some of the old men wear Dickies workpants and baseball caps with automotive labels; the undergrads sport caps emblazoned with team names or slogans like *WHATEVER* or *RAGE* or *GOOD TO GO*. Even in the no-smoking section everyone smokes—one of Harvey's pet peeves.

Our routine in restaurants follows a familiar pattern: Harvey meditates over the menu, examining it, dissecting, vectoring, and equating what his stomach really wants. I get a newspaper and usually skim through the first section before he's ready. Even as James Earl Ray is planning to go on *The Montel Williams Show* to plead for a new liver and two teenagers are indicted for the murder and dismemberment of a man in Central Park, there's an ongoing exist-

tential debate raging in Harvey's head: salt or sweet, eggs or waffles with maple syrup.

Occasionally, after a particularly deliberate order, he'll deliberately change it. Our waiter is a pathologically smiley K.U. student, well-versed in the dynamics of a breakfast rush, the coffee-cupping, caffeine-induced chaos of it. She waits as Harvey takes a second look at the menu. It could be that an actual week passes as he clears his throat a couple of times, then ponders some more, but she smiles patiently and then chirps back

"Eggs over easy, bacon, wheat toast, hot fries. More coffee?"

This town was once the setting for a Jan Robards made-for-television movie called *Day After*. In it, the sturdy people of American Hometown were blown to smithereens in a nuclear attack, and the few who survived wandered in a postapocalyptic stupor, in rags, bodies flayed with keloid scars. That Lawrence would come connected in the nation's psyche with nuclear devastation and that Einstein's brain, the power that unknowingly wrought the bomb, rested here for six or seven years is a small piece of irony that seems to escape Harvey. When I ask him about it, he says, "Way-ell, I guess that's true." And starts laughing.

The truth is that Einstein himself was convinced by the idea that his theory of relativity had opened up a Pandora's box of mutually assured annihilation. In a 1935 press conference in which he was asked about the possibility of an atomic bomb, the physicist said that the likelihood of transforming matter into energy was "something akin to shooting birds in the dark in a country where there are only a few birds." Four years later, however, the Nazis invaded Poland, and Einstein, the celebrated pacifist, signed a letter to President Roosevelt advocating the building of an atomic weapon. When the letter was personally delivered to Roosevelt, the President immediately saw the gravity of the situation—that if the Americans had just thought to build a bomb, perhaps the Nazis, with great scientists such as Heisenberg, were well on their way to completing one—ordered his chief of staff to begin immediately top-secret plans that led to the building of an atomic weapon. Sometime later, on a mesa in New Mexico, rose the Town That Never Was. Los Alamos, and, under the guidance of Robert Oppenheimer, came Little Boy and Fat Man, the bombs that would eventually decimate Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively.

Einstein, who was thought to be a Communist sympathizer by the FBI and an untrustworthy outspoken pacifist by the Roosevelt Adminis-



on, was not part of Oppenheimer's team. In fact, he had nothing to do with the bomb whatever, though even today his name is connected to it. The letter to Roosevelt haunted him and his family and, in one case, incited a physical attack against Einstein's son, Hans Albert. Writing to Linus Pauling, Einstein called the letter the "one mistake" of his life. When the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima—on August 6, 1945—Einstein heard the news after waking from a nap at Saranac Lake. "Oy vay," he said wearily. "Alas." When Harvey and I loop back on Interstate heading west, the snow has slowed to mere inches. In this single day, we will live through four seasons. Which can happen if one drives long enough with Einstein's brain in the trunk. Time bends and accelerates and overlaps; simultaneity rules. Heading north now to Lucas, Kansas, and a tourist spot known as the Garden of Eden, a spring wind suddenly whips across the prairie. Borne along on it, we rack up our speeding ticket.

My strategy has been to keep the Skylark at 80 or 80, scanning the road for cops, and when feeling luxurious or bored rotten to push it to 85 mph. Which is precisely what I get nailed for—in a 65-mile-per-hour zone. In the police car with the state trooper, I don't defend my actions, the greed of speed. "Where are you boys going in such a hurry?" he asks. Glancing through the windshield of the cruiser into the back window of the car, I can just make out the silver crown of Harvey's head, and I'm overcome with the desire to confess. It's not exactly as if we have a dead body in the trunk, but it's not as if we don't either.

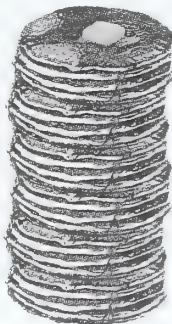
For some reason, though—perhaps out of self-preservation, for fear of losing the brain altogether—I simply say, "California." The trooper writes out the ticket, turns me against trying to go 85 again in his car, and sets me free. When he turns off the road in the opposite direction, I hike the odometer up to 80 and hold it steady. We drive south to Dodge City, the Oglala prairie under our wheels, huge cow-uddered clouds overhead. On the radio: steer calves and heifers for sale, Red Angus bulls, yearlings with good genetics and quality carcass. Later, Bobby Darin singing "Beyond the Sea," Harvey tapping a finger on his knee, the brain sloshing in its Tupperware. In this happy moment, we could probably live forever.

By twilight, a nocturne of autumn rain on the roof of the Skylark. We pass a pungent nitrogen scent, itself like a twisted metallic brain. Water tow- gleam in the silver light like spaceships, telephone poles pass like crucifixes, and grain elevators rise like organ pipes from the plains.

Out here, too, just before Dodge City and a most delicious slab of Angus fillet, before a night at the Astro Motel and a dawn that brings a herd of 18-wheelers hurtling for Abilene, we see a rainbow and come face-to-face with Harvey's blighted ambition. "I remember more rainbows in Kansas than any other state," he says, blinking his moist eyes at the brilliant beams of blue and green, orange and yellow. "I used to try to photograph rainbows, but they never turned out."

SOMEWHERE EAST OF  
LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO.  
FEBRUARY 22, 1997.

A confession: over the last days, at truck stops and drive-thrus, at restaurants and random road meetings, I've kept our little secret—that we've got Einstein's brain stashed in the trunk—and it's taken its psychic toll. There have been moments when I've been alone with the brain—Harvey in a rest room or visiting a friend—when I've opened up the car trunk and looked in, pinched the cold zipper between my thumb and forefinger, but then couldn't bring myself to unzip the duffel and unsheath the brain. Too much of a violation, an untenable breach in our manly society, even as Harvey covets for himself the gray matter upon which our private Skylarkian democracy is founded. In fact, we've been together now for nearly five full days; and he won't show me the brain. When I bring it up in conversation, he doesn't want to talk about it. When I ask him what parts of the brain we're traveling with exactly, he says he doesn't know and changes the subject. It is as if I am trying to find the secret center of his power. Which I am.



Leaving the Astro Motel the next morning, I unexpectedly spill my guts at the front desk, as I return our room keys to the manager. I tell him we've got the brain in the trunk, adding that we're headed to California to show it to Einstein's granddaughter. The manager, an affable, middle-age man, stops for a moment and looks at me sideways, realizes I'm serious, and tries to be hospitable. "Einstein, huh? That guy knew something," he says, folding his arms, shifting his weight. "That guy really did have a brain. But I wouldn't have wanted to live with him. You know . . . a little weirdy." He spins his finger in a cuckoo circle around his ear. "I have a nephew who is kind of a genius, but he hasn't flaked off yet. I met a guy in California who was so smart he couldn't talk. He sure could tell you how to look at the moon, but he couldn't tell you how to tie your shoes."



I'm not sure that I feel better, though I know that, in his way, he has tried to help. But does he scribble down our license-plate number as we leave?

In Liberal, Kansas, we eat at a glassed-in coffin of a restaurant called Mr. Breakfast. Old folks arrive in old, rusted Ford pickups, chain-smoking, hacking phlegm. Swab runny eggs with Wonder-bread toast, gulp mud-water coffee. Looking around—Harvey among the chorfining, anonymous throng—one discerns that this is not a bunch racing toward the millennium, that the millennium is in fact only a construction of the coastal power elite, a media-and-marketing event. Frankly, out in America, you get the feeling that America is dying. And along its highways and byways, the country seems less ready to leap into the future than it is already clinging to a sepia-toned past when America stood as the unencumbered Big Boy in a Manichaeian world of good and evil, capitalists and Commies. Even the neon oasis-pods of the interstate—the perpetual clusters of Wendy's, McDonald's, Denny's, and Burger King—are crowded with people strangely reclaiming bygone days, connecting themselves to some prior eating experience, reveling in the familiar.

We gas down into Oklahoma (through Tyronne, Hooker, Guymon, and Texhoma) and then the Texas Panhandle (edging the Rita Blanca National Grasslands, through Stratford, Dalhart, and Nara Visa)—all of it flat, with oil rigs like metronomes. I've taken to photographing Harvey by various signs and monuments along the road, and when we drift by a huge wooden cowboy with two guns blazing out across the empty plains, Harvey poses between his legs. By the New Mexico border, the wood-frame farmhouses have transmogrified into adobe. In Tucumcari, almost on cue, there is red dirt and tumbleweed. We drive through ruts and washes, over tableland and mesa. Here the hills are testicular, the ancient mounds mons-like, but all of it has a dead, washed-out sexuality, decayed from a time when this place was overrun by dinosaurs. We climb the crags that rim Pajarito Plateau to Los Alamos—the gridded, repressed hothouse that wrought Little Boy and Fat Man. In the rush of cacti, my frustration with Harvey's Humbertness, with his protective zeal when it comes to the brain, has bled into a kind of benevolent respect, an idea that Harvey actually may be a revolutionary hero. For wasn't he

the one who thumbed his nose at the gr U.S. Army doctor, Webb Haymaker, up the establishment, and legged it out West an end around with the brain? Maybe thought he was protecting the brain from so-called experts, or saving the brain of one the world's greatest pacifists from the clutches of the U.S. military. Wouldn't that make him the perfect Einsteinian hero?

After all, Einstein himself had nothing but disdain for authority, spent a life shirking it, wrote a letter to his friend Queen Elizabeth of Belgium that described the stuffy hierarchy of his adopted hometown, Princeton, he said it was "a quaint and ceremonious village of proud demigods on stilts."<sup>3</sup>

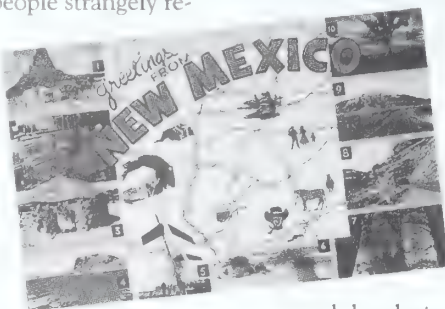
Perhaps this is why Harvey felt that Einstein's brain, one of the most powerful engines of thought ever on earth, deserved a committed curator, an unpartisan keeper, an eccentric brother whose sole purpose would be to unlock the biological secrets of Einstein's brain, placing it in the hands of a chosen few. Einstein himself had called his brain his laboratory, and with it had pondered the blueness of sky, the bending of starlight, the orbit of Mercury. And maybe, if Harvey knew nothing else, he knew enough to make sure that Einstein's brain didn't get sucked into the maw of the System.

This is my line of thought as we zag through saguaro and scrub brush, in the shadow of the Jemez Mountains. When I look over at Harvey, he has momentarily nodded off for the first time all trip. I've sort of nodded off, too. On a straightaway I look at the speedometer: we're going 110 miles an hour.

#### LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO. FEBRUARY 22, 1997.

At Los Alamos, we visit the Bradbury Science Museum. Not unexpectedly, the first exhibit is Einstein's letter to President Roosevelt. Harvey stands before it, nodding seriously, then moves on. The museum is a three-room pavilion walled with text and a grainy black-and-white photographs that depict the scientific, as well as human, challenges

<sup>3</sup> An accomplished philanderer, he also flouted the conventional morals of his day. "Einstein loved women," writes Plesch, whose father was a close friend, once said of physicist, "and the commoner and sweeter and smellier they were, the better he liked them." To live so completely in the head, he held the real world close—women, sailboats, a sudden meal of ten pounds of strawberries.





lding the bomb, while lionizing the patriotic  
n and women who contributed to the Man-  
tan Project. But the museum—and the cul-  
e of Los Alamos as a whole—is most glar-  
ly defined by what its curators seem to have  
ectively forgotten about the bomb.

For what the Bradbury Science Museum  
esn't show is an August 1945 morning in  
atral Hiroshima, trolleys packed with people,  
ousands of schoolgirls doing community ser-  
e in the streets. It doesn't show the B-29, the  
ola Gay, floating above at 31,000 feet, then  
easing four tons of metal through the air, Lit-  
Boy. It doesn't show the side of the bomb  
h its autographs and obscene  
ssages (one starts, "Greetings to  
Emperor . . .") and emblazoned  
h the crude naked likeness of  
a Hayworth.

What the museum forgets to  
w is the forty-three seconds of  
er silence, the time it takes Lit-  
Boy to drop on the city, and  
n perhaps the loudest second  
the twentieth century, a blast that equals  
500 tons of TNT. It doesn't show ground  
p, at Aioi Bridge, the birds incinerating in  
air, people flaming like candles, others  
illing like bronze Buddhas. And this is just  
beginning.

It doesn't show the firestorm that soon pul-  
izes the city, the atomic winds that turn in-  
a tornado in the north part of town. The  
e of ten bodies dead within a mile of the  
st, the 200,000 people who will finally be  
nted dead, and the black, sticky rain, carry-  
radioactive fallout, that beats relentlessly  
vn on the survivors. It doesn't show the  
ed man, skin hanging from his body like a  
iono, with his eyeball in his hand. It doesn't  
w the 70,000 rubble buildings and the  
ple trapped beneath them. Afterward, it  
sn't show Nagasaki and the 140,000 more  
anese who will die in like fashion. One can  
nd hours in the museum—as Harvey does,  
ully exiting, exhilarated, buzzed about the  
nders of technology—but this devastation  
ains invisible.

We spend the night at the ranch of some  
ads of mine near Cerrillos—a thirtyish cou-  
Scott and Clare. We share a terrific meal,  
Harvey is particularly animated, fired on red  
e, talking at length about the brain, about  
he came by it and how, after fixing it with  
naldehyde (his one mistake was injecting the  
n with warm formaldehyde instead of cold  
naldehyde, thus hastening its denaturation),  
photographed the brain. "It's a real tray-  
," he says. "I've gotten to meet many famous  
ple, many who knew Einstein."

Later, I leave the room to make a phone call,  
and when I return Harvey and Clare are alone at  
the table, flushed with excitement, absolutely  
twittering about the brain. They lower their  
voices when I come in, raise them when I leave  
again. Later, I feel compelled to ask Clare some  
questions: What is Harvey's magic? Does the  
brain turn her on? Does she feel hypnotized?  
"He's a very, very interesting man," she says.  
"And for some men chivalry is not dead. Did you  
see him pull out my chair for me before dinner?"

Before bed, we take a hot tub. I'm confident  
that Harvey will sit this one out, but, no sir, he  
doesn't. Shambles out in a borrowed bathrobe

Out here in America, one sees that the  
millennium is only a construction of  
the coastal power elite, a media event

and swim trunks, dips a toe in the boiling water.  
It's a pretty chilly night, stars glazed in the sky  
like cold coins on black ice, and it's hard not to  
worry about the physiological ramifications of  
dropping an eighty-four-year-old body into 104-  
degree water. But Harvey just throws himself in  
like a heavy stone. "OH, OH, HEH-HEH.  
WOW, THAT'S HOT. WOW, WOW,  
WOW!!!" We simmer for a while, and, chitchat-  
ting over the bubbler, it slips out that, in my ear-  
lier absence, Harvey opened the duffel for my  
friends, unpeeled the Tupperware top, fingered  
chunks of the brain, expansively answered ques-  
tions. This hits me hard. In fact, I take it as a  
personal injury. I want to say something about  
how unfair it is that I would have driven 2,000  
miles so far and not been allowed to examine the  
brain, while my friends, doing nothing but being  
their friendly selves, got to see the brain instan-  
tly. But when I look over at Harvey, he has his  
eyes closed, in a wonderful trance, his pale body  
streaming out from him underwater. I wait for as  
long as I can take it really, expecting to outlast  
him, as a kind of revenge. But damn if he doesn't  
seem to gain strength. Finally, grudgingly, I lift  
myself from the tub, from its magic eternal  
spring, and splosh inside, leaving him in the dark  
waters, keening softly with pleasure—ahhh,  
play-sure—alone beneath the cosmos.

NEAR KINGMAN, ARIZONA.  
FEBRUARY 23, 1997.

We reach one of those strange moments  
in the course of every road trip, exhaus-  
tion spilling into a kind of ecstasy,





towns darkly flashing like trout in a river. All things—the strains of “Wild Horses” on the radio, the galactic motion of driving, the purple night—seem like one perfect, unalloyed thing, haunted through. Like Charles Lind-

In a Las Vegas casino, I ask a dealer about Einstein. “Haven’t seen him in here tonight,” he says. “Sorry, pal.”

bergh, who believed that there were spirits riding with him over the Atlantic Ocean, we feel the presence of ghosts. Approaching the Hoover Dam, I stupidly pass a VW Bug and by the hairbreadth grace of God just barely avoid a head-on collision with a lumbering truck. Its lights, broken out like jewels on the grill, spell MARIANNE, the name of my mother.

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA.  
FEBRUARY 23, 1997.

The city is a coronation of shimmering brightnesses, like so much shattered glass thrown by the fistful over a sandy floor, a high-desert Hong Kong of possibility. “Sunday midnight is our busiest time of the week,” says the woman who checks us in to the Excalibur Hotel/Casino. “There’s no freakin’ explaining it.” We’ve driven to Las Vegas in a dopamine infusion of orange light, nerved on Coca-Cola, gorged on pizza, the Skylark smelling vaguely stale. The brain sloshing in the padded cranium of the trunk. On I-40 in Arizona, we passed a Navajo woman in a Ford pickup listening to the same radio station as we were, pounding out a drumbeat on her steering wheel. Later, an embalmed moon, Hale-Bopp like a pale teardrop. When Einstein once visited the Hopi Indians at the Grand Canyon, they honored him with an Indian name, the Great Relative, and presented him with a headdress.

And now, in the casino at midnight, we stand amid ballyhooing hordes of pale-skinned Easterners and leather-skinned Westerners, bikers and accountants, cowboy-hatted and big-haired and bald as cue balls, imperial on free drinks, soaring on the oxygen-enriched air pumping into the casino to keep people awake, everyone taking a stab at Instamatic riches. Harvey seems overwhelmed, his sensibilities so jangled that he schlepps straight up to one of our cheesy eighteenth-floor rooms—rooms that are tricked out like a cardboard-castle set for a

high school production of *Camelot*. He ref help with his luggage, has the brain slung on his shoulder in the duffel, tosses it in the closet.

Wide awake, I go back downstairs and roam all night, remembering that Einstein put his faith in games of chance. Abolished quantum mechanics, a theory that allowed for unpredictable outcomes—once said that God does not play dice with the universe. Yet Las Vegas is all about dice. And all about a perverse kind of hope too. One man at a ten-dollar blackjack table, a short, tight-bummed guy who smells of lime and aftershave, is abstractly addressing

male dealer in gambler clichés and porn-movie dialogue. “Oh yeah, baby! . . . Yeah, baby! Give it to me! . . . Hit me! . . . Oh yeah! . . . Right there! . . . Feels good!”

Soon, he is sitting alone. As are others like him. These are men so sunk down inside themselves that they don’t give a prostitute work the place a second look when she coozies up to them. Personally, I’m feeling pretty good, but some quick money at the roulette table, then, feeling a little less good, regroup in Minstrel’s Lounge. Maybe I’ve been alone with Harvey too long, probably I need friends, but I find myself asking an older couple about Einstein. The man looks at me suspiciously, but I don’t know anything about him really, and he doesn’t care one way or the other. I’m just trying to have fun,” he says in a Yankee accent.

“I don’t know anything either,” chimes the wife cheerfully. “Just that he was a genius or something.”

After the hot-tub revelation, I no longer feel compelled to keep our secret. I am traveling with the man who owns Einstein’s brain, I realize, and we are going to California to show it to Einstein’s granddaughter. The man folds his arms and looks at me straight on. “What makes you happy,” he says.

At an empty blackjack table, I ask a dealer, a Korean guy with a mustache, about Einstein. “I don’t know anything about him,” he says, “but that man over there should be able to help you.” He points to his manager, a white man with a mustache. He barely lets me finish before responding. “Haven’t seen him in here tonight. Sorry, pal.”

I try again, with the friendliest-looking man I can find. He’s middle-age and round-bellied, with a group of friends, all wearing Bucky Badger sweatshirts. I smile at them, ask their permission to phrase my question more carefully this time.

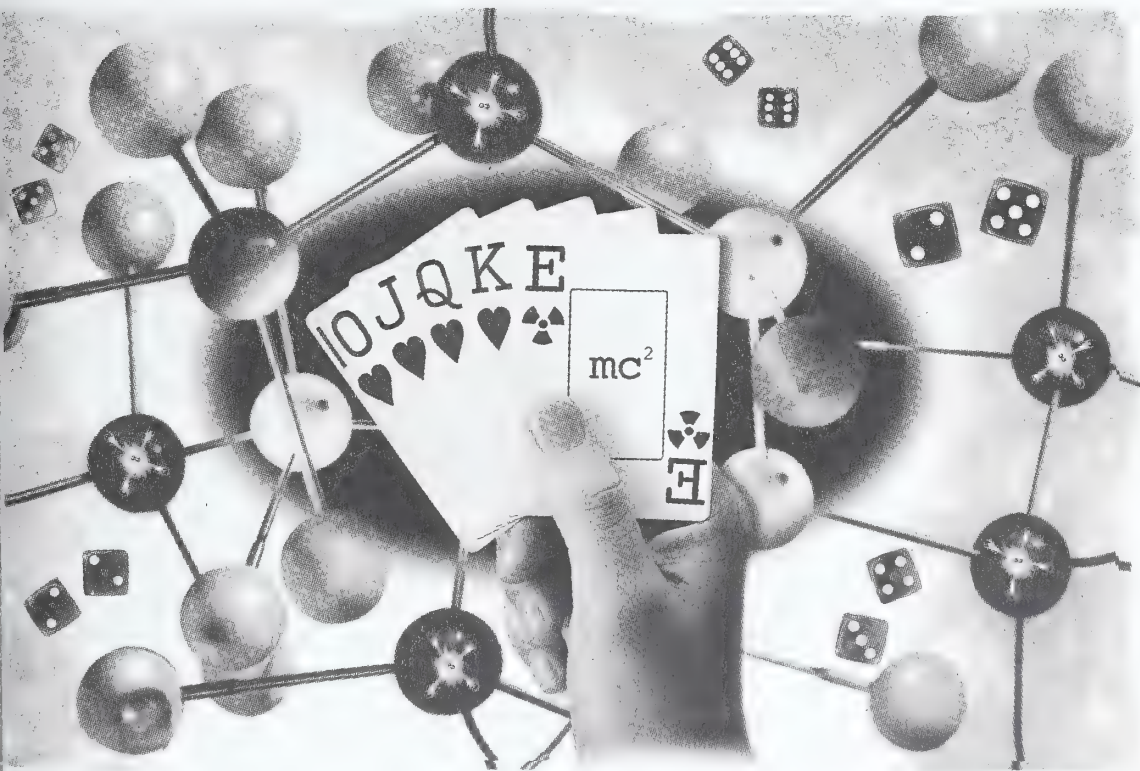
Mr. Badger furrows his brow. “Why do you want to know?” he demands. “Has anyone ever told you about  $E=mc^2$ ? Has anyone in this city ever bothered to tell you that?”



explain that in fact no one has, that I myself traveling with Einstein's brain. At the mention of the brain, he doesn't miss a beat, becomes patient. "Let's bury the damn brain and be done with it," he says, as if he's been in on the deal since day one.

I try one last time, a cocktail waitress with a tornado of blond hair. She stands in a short black-and-gold dress, looking like someone's great-aunt in age denial at a wedding. When I tell her if she happens to know what Albert Einstein is famous for, her jaw drops. "You're kidding?" she asks. "You must be kidding me. Is

We pause at a bank of slot machines. A group of grandmothers from Iowa give Harvey a quick once-over, then go back to their spinning lemons and limes and sevens. I pull a couple of coins from my pocket. "For good luck," I tell him. Until now, Harvey hasn't been keen on gambling, but for my sake he slides a quarter in the slot machine and reluctantly pulls the lever. In a way, however, Harvey has been a high-stakes gambler all along, having risked everything on one bet many, many years ago. And even though his slot windows display only unmatched fruit, he leaves the casino with his



there a hidden camera around here? You're the guy to ask me that tonight, and frankly I'm flattered." Her voice is pinched with anger. "You know what? I do know who he is..." She and I have known each other less than twenty years, and yet it feels as if we've lived a lifetime of emotions. "He invented the atom bomb, and I happen to think he's terrible."

The next morning, Harvey and I go for breakfast. There are huge lines trailing out of the notable Buffet and Sherwood Forest Café, so we watch a juggler dressed in green tightrope work the crowd—"Oh boy, whatta juggler!" says Harvey. Later, we gather our bags and head through the casino for the castle. As usual, Harvey refuses help with his luggage, has the brain slung over his shoulder.

His own jackpot safely stashed in the gray duffel, he slips over the Excalibur's rich purple carpet and out into the blinding sunlight and sandpapery air.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.  
FEBRUARY 24, 1997.

Down through the brown, low-slung, burned-out flats of the Mojave, passing the Soda and Cady Mountains, along Ivanpah and Silver Lakes, powdered white and dinosaur-bone dry, through the broken-winged, blue-shadowed towns of Baker and Yermo and Barstow, by the world's largest thermometer (electronically measuring temperatures to 140 degrees), then up over Cajon Summit—all of it



like a grim, parched-mouth, sun-bleached day-after-Las-Vegas hangover until suddenly Los Angeles explodes in a flash of lush green palm trees and red taillights at rush hour, the California sky tilting ultraviolet over the Pacific. Harvey reads from the map the whole way, literally reads to me like it's the story of Job. We

After a half block, Harvey glances once over his shoulder. "Well, we sure asked the right person," he says, with no irony intended. We drive the brain down Sunset and Wilshire, Rodeo and Hollywood, and finally hole up in Santa Monica.

We've come to L.A. so that Harvey can meet one of the doctors to whom Einstein once sent slices of his brain for research. Yet Harvey can't seem to reach him—can't recall his name when I ask. Meanwhile, I've managed to meet Roger Richman, president of his own celebrity licensing agency and the man who represents the beneficiaries of Einstein's estate of Albert Einstein, which

itself is presided over by Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Richman polices trademark fringements, hawks trade shows for Einstein contraband, and decides just how the image of the physicist will be used in advertisements and on merchandise around the world. When I called Richman from Kansas and told him that I was heading his way with Harvey and his brain, he was curt. "The brain is at the Smithsonian," he said. "And I'd rather not have you bring that man along."

And although the brain has never been at the Smithsonian, actually, and is authentic and still in our trunk, I'm forced to make up some polite excuse when I leave Harvey—something about seeing a friend. I drop him at the beach where he finds a senior center and spends his day writing postcards, making pals, playing cards. Then I guiltily head over to Richman's Beverly Hills office.

Richman, fifty-three, is a big, powerful man with big, powerful ideas and a full head of thickly parted, natural hair. He wears an Izod-type green short-sleeve shirt. He greets me saying, "You got the brain with you?" And then he starts laughing.

He ushers me into his office, a spacious, cluttered room strewn with unlicensed celebrity products, and before we begin our interview he puts a tape recorder next to mine, turns it on, and, in this most self-referential of cities, announces that he is taping for the autobiography he intends to write someday. "I would like to say that I'm a marketing genius," he announces.

Richman proceeds to tell me the illustrious history of Richman. How, eighteen years ago, the son of Bela Lugosi sued Universal Studios for a percentage of profits made from the image of his father as Dracula. And although he lost the lawsuit, the judgment contained one paragraph stating that whereas the studio owned the rights to Dracula and the family did

NO fewer than five U.S. law firms and as many abroad police the licensing and representation of Einstein, the Concept

pass a Chanel-eared Asian woman, driving a red BMW with a vanity plate that reads 2SUCESS. It seems every car here gleams with its own declaration of erotic or financial prowess: 8MILL; ORGAZ; MONEY. On the radio, we get an action-news update about a disgruntled circus clown who's stolen a car, busting for freedom on I-110. And, packed in, moving five abreast, having apparently passed our desirable exit some miles ago, we're completely lost for the first time all trip.

When we finally escape the highway, we're somewhere in West Hollywood, though we are looking for Santa Monica and the ocean. At a gas station, I approach a stocky, balding guy in short sleeves and a tie. He works for Kodak as a field engineer. He gives me directions and then asks where I'm from. Once he's registered our vitals, the expression on his face looks like a billboard for the country of the dumbfounded. "No fuck, you got Einstein's brain right over there?" he says. "No fucking way. Right in that trunk? The car with the little old man? Are you making a fucking movie of this? Holy fuck." He pulls out a business card with a picture of himself on it, sporting a full head of half-synthetic hair. "That was in my Hair Club days," he says, without hesitation. "You gotta put me in this fucking article. I'm the guy who gave you directions to the ocean. Einstein's fucking brain! What the fuck next? Aliens, right?"

About five blocks down, we realize that Hair Club has given us bum directions. We drift to the curb and ask help from the first person who appears on the other side of our rolled-down window: a cross-dresser in body-hugging, black leather with thin, shaven legs that seem six feet high and a tiara of some sort in his hair. He's an attractive woman and knows it and acts like he's been expecting us, bends into the window seductively, and gives precise directions, then says, "Hurry now, y'all don't want to miss that romantic sunset over the Pacific."



ve a right to control Lugosi's image, no one e had the right to appropriate it either. With at one paragraph, Richman set off for swap ets, stalking the stalls, picking up all kinds items that illegally appropriated the images dead stars. Then he went after the infringers behalf of the families.

n 1983, he drove to Sacramento with the as of John Wayne and Harpo Marx and the ndson of W. C. Fields, and together they ued for a celebrity-rights act, which legally ured that no one may use the name, voice, picture of a deceased personality without mission from the family. Then the group de the same argument in New York State, ere they were called "a group of tribal dhunters" by a lawyer representing Time . "It was the proudest moment of my life," hman says.

What he's become in these past two decades he Upholder of Dead Celebrity, the Protec- of the After-Image. Among the estates he recently serviced are those of W. C. Fields, is Armstrong, Jimmy Durante, Sigmund ud, Mae West, and the Wright brothers, as l as a personal favorite of mine, Basil Rath- ie. It's easier to have dead clients, Richman fides, because they don't cancel a million- lar dress deal when they get a better offer for othing line of their own at Kmart.

Of all his clients, Einstein is the biggest. hman employs five law firms domestically as many abroad to police him, paying up to ,000 a month for their services. He shows a stack of papers, dictionary thick. "All of se are Albert Einstein infringements," he lares proudly. He shows me a famous photo- oh of Einstein sticking his tongue out. "We er allow this picture to be used," he says ily. "You know people come back to me and 'Who are you to say that we can't use this en he stuck his tongue out and he knew tographers were there?' and I say, 'Hey, I'm nning a public trust; it's incumbent upon me rotect these people.'"

Richman won't reveal how much money he Hebrew University make from Einstein, but dmits it's more than from any other client. en I ask if the figure is in the millions, he oly says, "I wouldn't say *millions*." I remind that Einstein never allowed his name or im- to serve as a product endorsement during his "Money only appeals to selfishness and irre- bly invites abuse," the physicist said. "Can one imagine Moses, Jesus, or Gandhi with moneybags of Carnegie?" So wouldn't he ob- to himself selling Nikon cameras now? Rich- dismisses this idea out of hand and assures hat all the profits go to scholarships at He- v University.

Then, to show me just how bleak a world without Roger Richman can be, he leads me to a large cardboard box across the room. It's full of black-market desecrations—"horrible, horrible stuff," Richman says: A greeting card with Mae West urinating through an hourglass, one of Marilyn Monroe snorting cocaine. There's John Wayne toilet paper ("It's rough!—It's tough! And it doesn't take crap off anyone!") and a vial of Elvis's sweat ("Now you can let his perspiration be an inspiration") and a box of cotton balls emblazoned with the words BRANDO'S BALLS. But the *pièce de résistance*, the *succès de scandale*, is wrapped in paper with rubber bands around it. "I always keep him in his house," says Richman. "I never take him out."

Richman places it in my hands, and I unwrap it slowly to find eight inches of hard rubber topped by the smiley-faced head of President Ronald Reagan. It was this very dildo that Richman waved on the floor of the California statehouse to make his point—"I HAVE HERE IN MY HANDS A SEXUAL DEVICE," he bellowed to the shocked assemblage—and that pleases him.

Once the Gipper has been wrapped and replaced in the box, we tour the rest of the office. And Richman gallops on: "We're planning a major celebration of the millennium. We're doing mailings to advertising agencies reminding them that it's coming, that we represent all these people, that they should be celebrating this past century."

In order to put his own client list in perspec- tive, Richman recently called the Screen Actors Guild and found that about 18,000 actors have died in this century. "How many are marketable today?" asks Richman, throwing his arms open in apparent disbelief. "Twenty! These are the most talented people that ever lived... but most people are here and gone forever. You know, you have your fifteen minutes of fame and that's it."

Finally I ask Richman why our country is overly obsessed with celebrity today, why celebrity, as much as a Vegas jackpot, has become the Jell-O mold of the American dream. He begins by quoting Thoreau: "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."

"They'll never be an Elizabeth Taylor," he says. "Their hopes are their dreams and their dreams are on TV and their dreams are watching these beautiful chests walking into the Academy Awards in gorgeous gowns and they live for that. That's why Communism failed. [It] never gave people any hope. That's why democracy has been so successful. The American dream, it's based on hope... as long as you have money, you go right to the top."





He continues. "When I travel into the heartland of America—I go backpacking a lot—and talk about what I'm doing, oh, these people, they won't let me shut up. They just ask question after question after question. I'm like a hero to them. Around here, no one cares. Dead stars, oh, forget it. You're an agent for the dead, you're a joke, c'mon."

Harvey, snorkeling through his suitcase in our hotel room, has left the brain on top of the television

But Richman is convinced that he's having the last laugh, in no small part thanks to Einstein, who's gone global. In Japan, Einstein's image is used in a commercial for a video game called 3DO; in Hungary, his mug is plastered on billboards for a local telephone company; in South Africa, he advertises insurance. "He's the most widely recognized human being that ever lived," declares Richman. "In China"—where Richman has recently brokered a deal for Einstein T-shirts—"they're limited to one child per family, and every single parent calls their one child 'my little Einstein.'" He smiles at the thought.

"China is a cultural wasteland," he says emphatically. "They've never heard of John Wayne. They've never heard of Steve McQueen. They've never seen any of their movies. But Einstein, they know."

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA.  
FEBRUARY 26, 1997.

Harvey is to give a talk on Einstein's brain in San Jose. Before we left Princeton, he rooted through the letters he keeps in a shoe box—letters from an oddball collection of fans and groupies, critics and psychos, everywhere from Denmark to New Zealand, everyone from angry rabbis demanding the brain for burial to elegiacal schoolkids cutely waxing juvenile about trying to figure out relativity—and called a woman named Sarah Gonzalez, someone he doesn't know but who had written to him a few years ago randomly asking for a piece of the brain. When she heard from Harvey, she felt that the Lord God had intervened on her behalf. Ever since his call, she has been busy informing San Jose of our arrival, contacting the mayor and the local media, trying to set up a dinner party for leading lights in the community, and arrang-

ing for Harvey and Einstein's brain to v with students at Independence High Sch one of the biggest in the country.

Gonzalez has reserved us rooms at the H more Hotel, but when we arrive around A.M., out on some industrial edge of San J there is only one available room left, with single bed. "Why, I'm sure it's a big one,"

Harvey with a nervous chuckle.

I ask for a cot. And by the time I roll it into the room, the gray e fel is up on the television with weather on and Harvey is snoring through his suitcase, each i of his clothing—his silk pajama 49ers sweatshirt, his slippers, and dress shirt—wrapped in cephane. He has brought two suits tomorrow, neatly folded like big bat wings his case, a black winter worsted wool and baby-blue leisure-type suit that puts me mind of a carnival barker or a midwestern minimum-siding salesman.

I collapse on the cot, and no sooner do I the pillow than I'm wide awake. But I keep head buried as Harvey putters about the room. I can hear him running water in the sink clearing his throat, ironing. I can hear rustling through his cellophane-wrap clothes, then perusing his various articles Einstein, preparing for his lecture. I can hear something that sounds like an electric toothbrush. Before the sun rises, he finally blows down, and his breathing slows and then grows deeper like a river running into pools. Instead of snoring, there's a sweet lowing in his throat as he gasps for air, and finally it puts me to sleep. When I wake to the crunching of Harvey eating caramel corn, it's 8:00 A.M., and he's half-dressed, having opted for the black suit with black suspenders and a gray turtleneck, though the weather is verging on summer. Sarah Gonzalez calls and announces that she's in the lobby, nearly an hour early. While Harvey prints I go to meet her. She's the only person at the bar, busily doing something with her hair. When I come closer, I realize that she is prying on a set of acrylic fingernails. For a moment, she doesn't notice that I'm standing there, and we both admire her handiwork. When she looks up, she seems surprised. "Come," she says, extends an automatic hand with her new nails and half-bitten ones, and peels around me for Harvey and the brain.

Sarah Gonzalez is a short, pretty, quick-moving Filipino woman with black-and-gold sunglasses and an ostentatious emerald car. In mood and mannerisms she reminds me of a brushfire in a high wind. She personifies the migrant's dream. A former executive secret-



is now the president of her own company, ific Connections, which markets biomass rgy conversion—or, as she puts it, “turning stalks to megawatts.” Next week, she tells she will be in Manila meeting with the Filo president, Fidel V. Ramos, in hopes of aging the gift of energy—more lights and visions—to her country of birth.

When Harvey comes chugging out, she nches, then starts forward. “Dr. Harvey, I ume,” says Gonzalez, clucking and bowing head, “I can’t believe there is someone liv- and breathing who was so close to Ein- n.” Harvey has removed the brain from the duffel and now holds the Tupperware con-

his own suit, by comparison, dull and aged; there’s a tiny hole in one knee of his heavy suit pants. He clears his throat repeatedly and starts to chuckle. “Do you know a fella named Bur- roughs, William Burroughs?” She’s never heard of him. Harvey tries again.

“Where does Gates live?”

“Bill Gates, Dr. Harvey? That would be Seattle, I think. Isn’t that right, Mike? Seattle, Mike?”

“I thought that fella lived right here in Sili- con Valley,” says Harvey, hawkeyeing the streets suspiciously. A little later on, Harvey’s more at ease, sets himself chuckling again. “Those are the funniest looking trees,” he says.



er in his hand, though the plastic is cloud- nough that you can really only see urine- red liquid inside. Suddenly, it feels as if e not fully clothed. Even as Harvey palms brain in the lobby, I feel a need to hide it. zalez herself doesn’t notice and rushes us her Mercury Grand Marquis. She’s a an who enjoys the liberal use of first es. “Mike, what do you think of this scan- Mike?” she asks. “This—how do you say?— aign-contribution scandal, Mike?” She is aps the most persistently friendly person ever met.

Harvey sits in the front bucket seat, sunk in the fine Italian leather, the fabric of

“They are palm trees, Dr. Harvey,” says Gonzalez.

We are given a brief tour of “old San Jose”—a collection of Day-Glo houses that look brand new—then stop at Gonzalez’s house, a com- fortable though tightly packed bungalow on a cul-de-sac where she lives with her husband and five children, two of them teenagers. A full drum kit is set up in the living room. One gets the impression that when this house is full there’s probably nothing here but love and a hell of a racket. Meeting her husband, I retract her title and claim him as the friendliest person I’ve ever met. “Oh, Dr. Harvey, what does it feel like to be you?” he asks. He serves us cook-



ies and milk. Finally, after photographs have been taken on the front lawn, we start to leave. Harvey reaches down and lifts a pinecone from the perfect, chemical-fed turf. He holds it up, admiring its symmetry, and for reasons of his own pockets it.

Then we drive to Independence High, where we are picked up by a golf cart at the front entrance and whisked a half mile through campus. Harvey delivers his lecture in a dim, egg-cavern room flooded with students and the smell of bubble gum. Some wear baggy Starter sweats or jeans pulled low off their hips or unlaced high-tops; some have pierced noses or tongues or eyebrows. Some are white or Asian or Latino or African American. A number of boys have shaved the sides of their head and wear mop-tops or Egyptian pharaoh dos; a number of the girls have dyed hair, all colors of the rainbow.

The teachers shush everyone, but the hormonal thrum here defies complete silence, and there's a low-level sputter of laughter like a car chuffing even after the ignition's been turned off. And then suddenly Sarah Gonzalez is introducing Harvey, the gold of her glasses flashing success, and Harvey, shaped like a black candy cane, is stumping to the podium, looking every bit the retired undertaker. He clears his throat and chuckles and then clears his throat again. He runs his hands up and down the side of the podium and focuses on a spot at the back of the room, rheumy-eyed,

squinting. These are the thirteen-, fourteen-, and fifteen-year-olds of America—hundreds of clear eyes reflecting back at him, brains obsessed with Silverchair, Tupac, Blossom, and Brandy—and Harvey seems at a loss, begins a droning, discombobulated, start-and-stop remembrance of Albert Einstein almost as if he's talking to himself.

"The Great Scientist would eventually come up with the equation  $E=mc^2$ , and how he did that I'll never know, heh-heh..."

"He was a friendly person. Real easy to talk to, you know. Wore flannels and tennis shoes a lot..."

"I was just real lucky to be at the right place at the right time..."

Einstein's animated face is flashed on a screen, Harvey's impassive one beneath it. When Harvey senses he's losing his audience, he tells them about the autopsy, about the Great Scientist lying on the table and how his brain was removed. "He liked the fatty foods, you know," says Harvey. "That's what he died

of." He starts slowly for the Tupperware, the entire audience lean forward in their seats, crane their necks, hold their collective breath. For the first time, there is complete silence.

He pops the lid and unabashedly flicks it around for some of the brain, then holds a chunk of it. It's almost like a dream—illogically logical, shockingly normal. My first glimpse of the Tupperwared brain and it is three hundred other strangers. One girl squirms and general chaotic murmurings fill the room. Kids come to their feet in waves of "ohh" and "ahhhs." The smell of formaldehyde washes thickly over them, a scent of the ages, drives them back on their heels.

Harvey natters on, but no one is really listening now, just gasping at these blobs of brain. "I took the meninges off. . . . This is a little of the cortex. . . . He had more glial cells than the rest of us—those are the cells that nourish the neurons..."

They are transfixed by the liver-colored slices as if it were all a macabre Halloween joke. They are repulsed and captivated by the man whose fingers are wet with brain. Sarah Gonzalez stands up, slightly disheveled, flushed in the face. "Children, questions! Ask Dr. Harvey your questions!"

One swaggering boy in the back of the room raises his hand, seemingly offended: "Yeah, like, WHAT'S THE POINT?"

Harvey doesn't hear, puts his hand behind his ear to signal that he doesn't hear, and the teacher sitting nearby translates: "He wants to know what the point is," says the teacher politely.

Harvey hesitates for a second, then almost seems angry. "To see the difference between your brain and a genius's," he shoots back.

The crowd titters. A girl throws a high-five at her best friend. "Dang, girl."

The old man is cool!

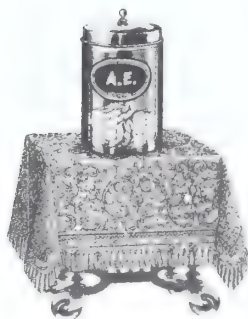
Another boy in the back stands. "I was like, Einstein didn't want people to take his brain."

Again the teacher translates, and as soon as Harvey processes the question he bristles. "Where are you getting your information?" he says.

"My world-government teacher," the boy says.

Harvey ponders this, then responds, as if to answer enough, "In Germany, it's very common to do an autopsy and take the brain out."

When the period ends, the students stare at Harvey and the brain. They want to know how long he's had it (forty-two years). He plans to clone it ("Way-ell, under the right conditions someday, I suppose it might be done"). Whether an evil dictator such





Idafi might try to get his hands on it (heh-heh-heh"). I try to get close, but the road is too thick, the crush to see the brain is great, and so I stand on the edges with the gazes. Even as Harvey gambols outside late, a few students come up and ask him. He says, "Yo, man, where you going next? Can we follow?" Harvey answers with triumph, stammers a bit, but he doesn't really know where he's going now, as Sarah Gonzalez leads him to a seat in a waiting car.

When we pull away, I wonder how we must look like to the students waving good-bye. Harvey rides shotgun all the ways, with the Tupperware brain on his lap—a man beyond their own grandfathers, come from a different dimension in space and time really, lit down here for a weird moment at Independence High, then away again, driving on a golf cart down the cement-surfaced sidewalks of their world.

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA.  
FEBRUARY 27, 1997.

I've reached the end of the road. Evelyn Einstein greets us at the door to her bay-side apartment complex in a black sweater, wearing two Star Trek pins and globe earrings. Nearly a head taller than Harvey, she is a big-boned fifty-six-year-old, though looks younger, with a short bob of brown hair. Due to a series of illnesses over the last few years, she walks in small steps and breathes heavily with the slightest exertion. She gives off an enormous sadness, though her powers of humor and forgiveness seem to run equally as strong. Despite the distress that Harvey's removal of the brain caused her father—Hans Einstein—and the rest of the family, she has invited us to her house.

Evelyn is known to be the adopted daughter of Hans Albert, though the circumstance of her lineage is a bit clouded. At least one brother, Charles Boyd, tried but failed to identify the DNA of Albert's brain matter and Evelyn's skin because of suggestions that Evelyn might actually be Albert's daughter. And though Albert's DNA was too denatured to analyze, the attempt led to something of a scandal. Even as Evelyn characterizes Boyd's thesis as "unfortunate and unfounded," however, the resemblance to Einstein, the mirthful playfulness in her heavy-lidded eyes and the Pi-shaped shape of her face, is uncanny. Evelyn herself ruefully says, "If you believe in what Einstein said about time, then I'm really his mother anyway."

From her light-filled living room, you can see the skyline of San Francisco, Angel Island rising from the sun-flecked blue bay; Mt. Tamalpais lurking in the distance. Among artifacts and antique clocks, Evelyn offers us seats.

The high school students insist on knowing if Harvey plans to clone the brain. "Heh-heh-heh," he says

We have come a long way and yet it feels like Harvey would like to be anywhere else but here. Evelyn sits down. I fall onto the plush couch. Harvey remains standing.

Evelyn tells us about what it was like to grow up as an Einstein, how her life became an exercise in navigating the jagged shoals of her family. Her father had inherited a degree of his own father's cold distance—she refers to her grandfather only as Albert or Albie—and Evelyn found herself shipped off to school in Switzerland. She came back to Berkeley for college, had a bad marriage, lived for a year on the streets, then later worked as a cop in Berkeley and afterward with cult members and their families. She has very few remembrances of her grandfather. Most of the letters he'd once sent her were stolen.

As she says this, Harvey still stands frozen in the middle of the room, speechless. Evelyn does what she can to politely ignore him, asks me innocuous questions about the trip, waiting for him to sit, too. But he doesn't. He just stands there, his arms limply at his side. He breathes more quickly. Somewhere in his head, virulent, radioactive cells of what? guilt? proliferate and mushroom. He stands awkwardly in the middle of the room and just won't sit, can't sit, holds the brain in its Tupperware, trembling in his left hand. Having arrived here, does he now have second thoughts? Could he ever have imagined, those forty-two years ago, when he cut the brain from Einstein's head, that he would now be standing here before Evelyn Einstein with it in his hands?

The fourth time that Evelyn offers him a seat he takes it. He laughs nervously, then clears his throat. "Real good," he says. Evelyn is talking about cults, how frightening they are and how what's most frightening about cults is that it's you and I who end up getting sucked in, how easy mind control really is. "All my friends say I should start one," she says, joking. "I could channel Albert. I mean, when Linda Evans channels Ramtha she talks like Yul Brynner.





It's just hysterical. If this broad can channel a 30,000-year-old guy, I can channel Albert."

Having summoned his courage, Harvey abruptly pulls out a sheaf of photographs and slides with cresyl violet stains of axons and glial cells, then plunks the Tupperware on the table. "Ah, brain time," says Evelyn, and Harvey just begins talking as if he's talking to the youngsters at Independence High School again. "This is a picture of the brain from different aspects, olfactory nerve, and so forth." He pulls out a photo of Einstein. "I like to show this picture because it shows him as a younger man, you know, when he first came over to be an American. So many of the photos you see of him are when he was an older man."

"I have a lot when he was young," says Evelyn.

"You do? I'll trade you some," says Harvey.

"Did you autopsy the whole body?"

"The whole body."

After all these miles, all these days  
on the road with Harvey, at last I am  
alone with the brain!

"What was that like?"

Harvey pauses a moment, clears his throat. "Why, it made me feel humble and insignificant."

"Did he have a gall bladder? Or had they taken it out?"

"I think he still had a gall bladder. Heh-heh. Yeah, his diet was his nemesis, you know, because he lived before we knew what cholesterol did to the blood, so he probably walked around with high blood cholesterol, much of it being deposited in his blood vessels. That aorta, that was just full of cholesterol plaque."

Evelyn nods. "Yeah . . . well, of course, the European diet . . . my father and I would fight over fat. When we got a ham, we would cut off the fat and fry it, then fight over it. Bitterly." Evelyn smiles.

"And all that good goose grease," chimes in Harvey.

"Oh yeah. Well, in those days goose . . . well, goose is actually a lot safer than beef, a lot less cholesterol."

"Oh yeah? I didn't know that."

"It's a family that just adored fat," she says.

"I used to eat in a little inn up in Metuchen, New Jersey, where your grandfather would

spend weekends, and they had these cheeses you know, full-fat cheeses and nice wines."

"I don't know if he was into wines," says Evelyn.

"I never saw him drink it myself," says Evelyn, forgetting, then perhaps remembering that he met Einstein only once. "Well, the innkeeper had a good supply of wine, and I thought it was for your grandfather. Maybe it wasn't."

There is some talk about the size of the brain. Evelyn contends that at 1,230 grams, Einstein qualifies as microcephalic according to the 1923 edition of *Gray's Anatomy*—that is, smaller than normal—but Harvey insists the brain was normal size for a man Einstein's age, given the fact that brains shrink with time. He lets her see some slides but seems unwilling to open the Tupperware. When he shows her a piece of the brain, she seems a bit put out, uncaps the lid for a moment, then almost immediately lids it. He offers Evelyn a piece—to which she says, "That would be wonderful"—then, curiously, he

gives it to her. Evelyn seems perplexed, as am I. After all of this, it seems, Harvey has decided there will be no show-and-tell of the actual gray matter.

"I'm amazed they didn't trade with the brain earlier, right before when he died, actually," Evelyn says. Harvey gets uncomfortable again, stiffening into his pillbox salt. The words slow as they come from his mouth: something about the fissure of Sylvian, the occipital lobe, cingulate gyrus. All of it a part of some abstract painting, some hocus-practice. "It took us a while," he says finally.

And then, as we make plans to leave for dinner, Harvey abruptly ends the meeting. "Well, it's been a real play-sure," he says, surprising us by surprise. And then he explains: earlier, in San Jose, unbeknownst to me, he made a call to his eighty-five-year-old cousin in Mateo and now insists that he must go spend the night there, assuming that I will take more than halfway back to San Jose in one hour traffic. But to come this far for only an hour? And besides, Evelyn has made reservations for us all to have dinner. But not sways Harvey. I suggest that his cousin join us or that we visit his cousin in the morning during rush hour. Harvey stands firm; then I stand firm. After 4,000 miles of driving, I, for my part, am eating with the granddaughter of Albert Einstein. Harvey gets on the phone with his cousin and says loudly enough so that I hear, "The chauffeur won't give me a ride."

Ever the rambler, Harvey decides to take public transportation—BART—and then I



cousin pick him up at the station. And so  
 loes. We pile into the Skylark and drive to  
 arby station, Harvey in the back seat with  
 brain. Although Harvey and I will meet  
 n tomorrow for a visit with Marian Dia-  
 nd, and although we will share a heartfelt  
 l-bye as I drop him off at the train station  
 n (he on his way to the airport to fly back  
 e, me off to visit friends), this parting feels  
 the real end of our trip. At the station,  
 vey opens his case and presents Evelyn  
 a postcard: a black-and-white photo of  
 self looking pensive in a striped turtleneck,  
 ear the size of a small slipper, gazing sleepy-  
 at some form in the distance, some ghost-  
 esence. "That's a very nice one," she says  
 rely.

"Vessir," says Harvey. "Couldn't have been  
 sier to meet..."

all seems so anticlimactic, but so appro-  
 re. So like Harvey. And then he's off with  
 suitcase full of cellophane-wrapped  
 nes, caught in a river of people drifting to-  
 i the escalators, spilling underground, the  
 r tassell of his hair flashing once, then his  
 7 going down and down into the cata-  
 b's shadow.

's not until after Evelyn and I have had  
 er that we realize the brain is still with  
 n fact, it's still sitting on the car's back  
 n in its bubble of Tupperware, lit by a  
 ight, slopping in formaldehyde. It has  
 there for three hours, as Evelyn told me  
 dessert about the ugly schisms and legal  
 es inside her family for letters left behind  
 Albie." Given Harvey's well-documented  
 lianship of the brain, given the fact that  
 ein seems to be Harvey's invisible friend,  
 ems impossible that he's just forgotten it,  
 then maybe not. Maybe, through some  
 nscious lapse or some odd, oblique act of  
 tion, he has left it for us. A passing of  
 brain to the next generation. My giddi-  
 is now rivaled only by my sudden para-  
 . What if it gets ripped off?

"le left the brain?" says Evelyn. "Does he do  
 often?"

"lope," I say, and suddenly we are smiling at  
 other.

e don't look at it right away—right there  
 ll view of the strolling sidewalk masses—  
 rive back to Evelyn's apartment by the  
 l stop in front of the building with the Sky-  
 idling. I reach back and take the Tupper-  
 in my hands, then unseal the lid, and, in  
 omelight of the car, open the container.

ter all these miles, all these days on the  
 during which the vengeful gray duffel  
 ed me, I am finally afforded the inspection  
 denied back in New Mexico. The bits of

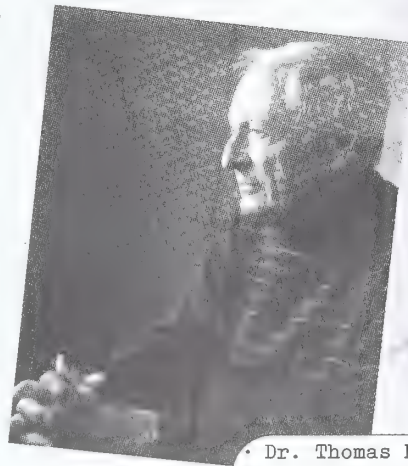
Einstein's brain are pouched in a white cloth,  
 floating in formaldehyde. When I unravel the  
 cloth, maybe a dozen golf-ball-size chunks of  
 the brain spill out—parts from the cerebral cor-  
 tex and the frontal lobe. The smell of formalde-  
 hyde smacks us like a backhand, and for a mo-  
 ment I actually feel as if I might puke. The  
 pieces are sealed in celloidin—the liver-colored  
 blobs of brain rimmed by gold wax. I pick some  
 out of the plastic container and hand a few to  
 Evelyn. They feel squishy, weigh about the  
 same as very light beach stones. We hold them  
 up like jewelers, marveling at how they seem  
 less like a brain than—what?—some kind of  
 snack food, some kind of energy chunk for ge-  
 nius triathletes. Or an edible product that offers  
 the consumer world peace, space travel, eterni-  
 ty. Even today, the Asmat of Irian Jaya believe  
 that to consume a brain is to gain the mystical  
 essence of another person. But to be absolutely  
 honest, I never thought that, holding Einstein's  
 brain, I'd somehow imagine eating it.

"So this is what all the  
 fuss is about," says Evelyn.  
 She pokes at the brain-  
 nuggets still in the Tup-  
 perware, laps formalde-  
 hyde on them. A security  
 guard walks by and  
 glances at us, then keeps  
 walking. There is, I must  
 admit, something en-  
 tirely bizarre about Eve-  
 lyn messing around with  
 her grandfather's brain,  
 checking his soggy neu-  
 rons. But she seems  
 more intrigued than  
 grossed out. "You  
 could make a nice  
 necklace of this one," she says, hold-  
 ing up a circular piece of brain. "This is pretty  
 weird, huh?"

Watching her in the cast of domelight—an  
 impression of her sadness returning to me, the  
 thrill of adrenaline confusing everything—I'm  
 overcome with a desire to make her happy for  
 a moment. Without thinking, I say, "You  
 should take it." Then I remind her that Har-  
 vey had offered her a piece earlier but had  
 never given it to her. "It belongs to you any-  
 way," I say. Weeks later, on the phone, she'll  
 tell me, "I wish I'd taken it." But now, sitting  
 back in the teal velour of the Skylark, she says,  
 "I couldn't."

Instead, she puts the pieces back in the  
 Tupperware, closes it, and hands it to me. She  
 gets out of the car and heavily walks herself  
 inside.

Which leaves just me and the brain.



• Dr. Thomas Harvey,  
 as he appears on his  
 own postcard •



THE FLAMINGO MOTEL.  
FEBRUARY 28, 1997.

We drive the East Shore Freeway to University Avenue—skirting the bay, all black and glassed-over, San Francisco on the other side like so many lit-up missile silos—and then head toward Shattuck Avenue. Although I'm exhausted, I suddenly feel very free, have this desire to start driving back across America, sans Harvey. On the radio, there's a local talk show about UFOs, an expert insisting that in February 1954, Eisenhower disappeared for three days, allegedly making contact with aliens.

Although there is no convention that we know of in Berkeley, we soon find that all the inns are full. All the inns but the Flamingo Motel—a pink, cement, L-shaped, Forties-style two-story with a mod neon rendering of a flamingo. A fleabag. But it's enough. A double bed, a bathroom, a rotary phone. Some brother partyers have an upstairs room at the far end of the motel and are drinking cases of Pabst Blue Ribbon. As I carry the brain up to my room, they eye me, then hoot and toss their crushed cans over the banister into the parking lot.

Inside our room, we are hit with an industrial-size wallop of disinfectant. The room is the size of a couple of horse stalls with a rust-colored unvacuumed shag rug scorched with cigarette burns. A few stations come in on the television, which is bolted high on the wall. *Nightline* is getting to the bottom of the sheep-cloning business. It's been a long day, and yet the brain has got me pumped up. I try to make a phone call, but the phone is broken. I try to write some postcards, but my pen explodes. By some trick of the room's mirror, it seems that there are lights levitating everywhere. Finally, not quite knowing what to do, I go to bed. I put Einstein's brain on one pillow and rest my own head on the other one next to it, fewer than four inches away. Just to see. I've come 4,000 miles for this moment, and now all I do is fall asleep. Light from the road slips over the room—a greenish, underwater glow—and the traffic noise dims. I can hear beer cans softly pattering down on the pavement, then nothing.

It's possible that in our dreams we enter a different dimension of the universe. On this night, it's possible that I suddenly have three wives and ten kids and twelve grandchildren, that I've become Harvey himself, that I open up bodies to find more bodies and open those bodies to find that I'm falling through space and time. It's possible that, in some fifth dimension,

I am Robert Oppenheimer and Mahatma Gandhi, Billie Holiday and Adolf Hitler. I am Honus Wagner and Olga Korbut. I am Napoleon and Cambodian and Tutsi. I am Tupac Amaru and NASA astronaut. I am a scatterling, I am a billionaire, I am a person in a field in North Dakota about to be abducted by a UFO, I am possible, too, that I am nobody, or rather myself, slightly dazed and confused, curled up with a question mark in a pink motel with Einstein's brain on the pillow by my head.

When I wake the next morning, craving coffee, there is only the world as I know it against the desk chair in its place, the wrappered in the shower, the brain sitting demurely on the pillow, the Flamingo still the Flamingo, cigarette burns in the rusty rug. There's a denigrating grand beauty to its shoddiness.

When I step outside into the bright morning sun of California, I have the top of my head in the Tupperware. And although later I will return the brain to Harvey, I am for a brief moment man with the plan, the keeper of the cosmos. Do I feel the thing that all totems and fetiches make people feel? Something that I can believe in? A power larger than myself that I can submit to? Salvation? Have I touched eternity?

I'm not sure. The beer cans strewn in the parking lot make out the rough shape of America, surrounded by pools of sudsy, gold liquid. And the birds have come down out of the sky and they're drinking from it. Even now, the universe is filling with dark matter. We're slowing down. Snowballs the size of jetliners are pelting our atmosphere. Perhaps a meteor has just been bumped into a new formation, straight toward Earth, and we will know anything about it until it explodes us as meteors once exploded the dinosaurs.

But I am here now. In the now now. I have come back up from the other side of the earth, the birds have come down from the sky. There are flashes of orange light, the air is flooded with honeysuckle. I feel something I can't quite put my finger on, something ineffable but deeply unsayable. Is it love or not hate? Is it joy or just not sadness? For the moment, all of time seems to flow through the Flamingo, its bright edges reflecting the past and the present, travelers packing their bags and rivering into some farther future. We're always driving with our secrets in the trunk, amazed by the cows and rainbows and poplar trees. And do I dare to think that there will be no ending of the world, of America, of ourselves? I do. I really do. For in some resonance, in some light wave, in some shimmering time, we are out there now, and forever, existing, even as surely as Einstein himself comes to exist, here in my hands.



# FASCISM À LA MODE

In France, the far right presses for national purity

By David Zane Mairowitz

Last May, on the night of the first round of nationwide municipal elections, I left my Avignon apartment, turned a corner, and headed down the Rue de la République toward the local headquarters of Jean-Marie Le Pen's far right National Front Party. The party's group had just won 24 percent of the Avignon vote—more than twice what it needed to qualify for the runoff round a week later but nowhere near enough to allow for hopes of victory—and I was curious to see what mood the party faithful were in. Normally the headquarters are easy to miss. There is no sign on the door, no posters or tickers in the window, not even a bell—only a seemingly empty, anonymous storefront. Part of this is attributable to the smothering paranoia of Le Pen and his cronies, who see themselves as beleaguered and marginalized, fighting a war of resistance against the strains of national purity that would sully France. But there are practical reasons for their concern as well. Although popular throughout the south, and



growing ever more so, the Front still has plenty of detractors, and some of them don't mind throwing bricks through windows.

Tonight, however, there were no bricks, and there was certainly no missing the place. As soon as I rounded the corner I could see people spilling out onto the sidewalk—people I knew.

My local mechanic was there, and the *boulangerie* woman, and enough of my neighbors that it took some time to get through all the *bonsoirs* and small talk required of me. Were these people the neofascists I had come to fear as the Front swept town after town in the south? Were they brownshirts? No, just the shopkeepers and skilled workers you'd expect to find in any small European town. They were good people, decent and well-meaning, legitimately concerned about their future, if perhaps not fully aware of the historical implications of a Front victory.

Inside they were celebrating. The Front's candidate, a man by the very un-working-class-sounding name of Thibaut de La Tocnaye (and the victim of countless Hitler mustaches drawn on his campaign posters), had no chance at all in the next week's runoff, but the party was sensing victory nonetheless. For de La Tocnaye was about to do locally what Le Pen had candidates positioned to do across the nation: he was going to spoil the election for the conservatives. By staying in the race, de La Tocnaye and his compatriots would split the right-wing vote and force a Socialist victory. In the

David Zane Mairowitz is the author (with Bert Crumb) of *Introducing Kafka*, a biography in cartoons. His radio opera *The Luptuous Tango* recently won the Prix de la France.



short on such tactics would weaken the right. But at the long run the Front would benefit from the destruction of the centrist obstacle in its path—specifically, President Jacques Chirac and those legislators rallied around him. Le Pen had made no secret of his hatred for Chirac, and in a week's time he would have cause for glee: Chirac would lose his majority, and although the Front would take only 15 percent of the national vote and win but one parliamentary seat, its future would be brighter than ever before.

On June 2, the morning after the election's final round, I opened my *International Herald Tribune* and was greeted by the optimistic headline FRANCE'S LEFT TURN. Fair enough, but over the next few days the media seemed to lose sight of the fact that the turn was made by an extremely right-wing backseat driver. In the post-vote autopsy columns provided by the national daily *Liberation*, for example, the Front was being considered almost as great a loser as Chirac, and some commentators were even predicting that we had seen the last of the neofascists. In fact, most of the French newspapers stuck to the same easily digestible story—victorious left crushes never-to-be-seen-again right—and did not worry over what the ability to decide a national election implied about the Front's future.

Such is the view of the Paris-based journalist. But I live in Avignon, and in Avignon we know better. The Front isn't finished. In fact, it's getting stronger.

Now and then my son and I go out with a set of scraping tools and attempt to remove the Front stickers that clutter the lampposts and street signs throughout our neighborhood. "Mains Propres, Tête Haute" ("Hands Clean, Head High") they read, both proclaiming and appealing to the latest wave of French disgust with government corruption. The tactic has been effective, if somewhat hypocritical. Last February, in the southern industrial city of Vitrolles, the party toppled the Socialist mayor, currently under investigation for fiscal impropriety, and replaced him

with Catherine Mégret, the wife of Front bigwig Bruno Mégret, who was himself disqualified from running for having overspent the legal limit on campaign funding. Although largely an unknown quantity, she cannot as yet be accused of corruption herself, and this is what counts most in the local context. For decades the Front has been denied access to the legislature, and its strategy has been instead to build a power base on the municipal level. In the summer of 1995, Front candidates won mayoral races in three fair-size southern towns—Marignane, Orange, and Toulon. If these people can stay out of prison (where a fair number of French mayors, especially here in the south, spend part of their retirement), there is hope that they may be able to gain a respectability that will allow them to infiltrate the national system from below. It is, after all, perfectly acceptable in France to hold a federal post and a mayorship simultaneously. The last prime minister was also the mayor of Bordeaux, and the Front's single parliamentary seat in this election was won by Jean-Marie Le Chevallier, the mayor of Toulon.

And so the game is played out on the local level. The Front intends to capture as many "model cities" as possible and drum up grass-roots support. Hence the stickers covering everything in sight. Hence the alarmist handbills citing attacks on "French" citizens by local "Arabs" or "blacks." Hence the doorbells rung by proselytizers, the youth clubs organized, the small three- or four-person cells that seek out new recruits. The Front has managed to make frightening progress with the military and police communities; it has even established a union, FN-Police, to encourage their loyalty. In order to influence the national education agenda, the party also is attempting to create its own Parent-Teacher Association.

In other words, Le Pen and the Front do not, for the moment, need seats in Parliament. Towns will do just fine. In Paris, Le Chevallier will be hooted down, but in Toulon he is king. When, last year, a group of booksellers invited the Polish-French

author Marek Halter to receive a special award at the Toulon Book Fair, Le Chevallier vetoed the notion, "He comes from Poland, is a naturalized French citizen, is in favor of immigration and of imposing a metropolitan culture on France." The text: Halter is a Jew. Le Chevallier instead chose none other than Brigitte Bardot (whose memoirs are a bestseller in France) to receive the Book Fair's prize, though she refused the honor, apparently reasoning that her reputation had been tarnished enough by the very things that she expressed. Le Chevallier: the strict racist remarks she has made in public over the last few years and the fact that her latest spouse, Bernard Lemaire, is a leading member of the Front and one of Le Pen's associates. In the end, the Toulon Book Fair resembled nothing so much as a national Front convention, with a devoted to the collected speeches of Marshal Pétain, the 1958 right-wing putsch in Algeria, and books about Clovis I, the fifth-century king of the Franks who united "French" territory and has become the party's unofficial patron saint. With a reversal of the type typical of Le Pen and his ilk, this was carried out in the name of "pluralism," the idea being that the media in the hands of "internationalists" (in case the reference is not clear, the party has at times employed the term "T-lévy-sion") the Front's viewpoint is underrepresented, if not outright censored.

Nor have the other Front municipalities hesitated to heavy-hand their constituents into their constituents' cultural centers. In Orange, Mayor Jacques Bordet decided that the public library would henceforth be directly answerable to the *mairie* (or town hall). Suddenly books that did not reflect Front ideology began disappearing from the shelves—including works on the French Revolution (the sentiment "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" is a slogan to the Front), collections of stories from North Africa, and a book with illustrations showing races mixing. Also included, of course, were any works by authors known to be hostile to the party. The replacements? Henry Coste's *The Financiers Who Control*



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World: *Mysteries and Secrets of B. N. Brith*, the works of the Italian fascist Julius Evola, and the usual smattering of French Holocaust-denial tomes being produced by the negationist history department at the University of Lyon III.

Although he lost his presidential bid, and holds no political office, Le Pen is clearly the one giving the cues. Just after the elections he announced that all grants to local nonprofit cultural and educational groups within the Front's jurisdiction would be "reviewed." Since most aid of this sort occurs on the municipal level in France, and since many organizations— theater troupes, community centers, and the like— simply cannot exist without public assistance, this was no small threat. But Le Pen's mayors did him one better. They eliminated virtually all grants to groups outside the Front's cultural and political sphere. Gone, or soon to be, were those groups run by the Front's political adversaries. Gone were the theater troupes and cinemas not sufficiently in line with the far right. And gone as well were those groups performing such apparently distasteful tasks as giving help and comfort to those dying of AIDS.

Le Pen recently appeared at a public meeting with a plate bearing a plaster model of the severed head of Catherine Trautmann, the mayor of Strasbourg (and now minister of culture in the new Socialist government). Supporting his daughter Marie-Caroline's campaign in the town of Mantes-la-Jolie, he waded into a group of some 200 anti-Front demonstrators and roughed up the Socialist candidate, a woman. He has also been known to lower his trousers in front of reporters, and this has surely hurt him among swing voters. But for his own hard-core supporters, especially in the more macho culture of the south, such behavior simply makes him more credible that this is a man who has the courage of his convictions, who "talks straight" while most politicians waffle.

Straight talk goes a long way in this part of France, especially with

the so-called *pieds-noirs*, the hundreds of thousands of French Algerians who settled in the south after being chased out of North Africa when Algeria gained its independence in 1962. Historically lied to by all the traditional parties, they bear a particular grudge against De Gaulle for "giving up" Algeria, and many of them would never dream of voting for a Gaullist such as Chirac. Le Pen's populist tactics appeal to their sense of persecution: not only did the Arabs kick us out of Algeria but now they're colonizing France. Cynically playing on the famous Arab nationalist slogan "*Algérie algérienne*," Le Pen warns that we will be facing a "*France algérienne*" unless something is done.\*

Daniel Simonpiéri, the Front mayor of Marignane, has been doing something. Responsible as mayor for daily banalities such as school meals, he has eliminated non-pork lunches from public school cafeterias. This means that on days when pork is on the menu, Jewish or Muslim children have no choice but to eat it or, preferably, leave the premises. Education officials in Marignane claim that this measure is strictly "budgetary." In the Toulon marketplace, vendors of African and West Indian foodstuffs have had their stalls closed on the grounds that only locally grown produce can legally be sold there. More important, family allowances and social security payments are in the hands of Front bureaucrats, who claim that foreign families steal these benefits from Frenchmen. Although local governments cannot legally refuse such payments, they can and do create bureaucratic obstacles that make it almost impossible for "immigrants" to claim their money.

Brigitte Bardot, who last year was fined for defamatory remarks she

made in an interview with the newspaper *Le Figaro*, has been doing part, too. Known defender of animals against the cruelties of nature, she has spoken out in particular against the Muslim holy rite of *el-Kebir*, in which lambs "have their throats cut, one after the other, with dull blades." In Bardot's image of France overrun by Arabs, one can no longer hear the village church bells ringing for the barbaric cries of the muezzin coming from the omnipresent mosques. Although a complete fantasy, I have heard this sentiment echoed by people here in Midi, who tell me that they no longer hear French spoken in the streets, only Arabic.

Having been taken to court innumerable times for his own overtly racist remarks, Le Pen now adopts a crypto-vocabulary, employing terms as "the immigration lobby" and "cosmopolitanism." He knows that he must appear modern and reasonable, concerned with bread-and-butter issues, all while keeping his blatantly totalitarian long-term agenda only slightly out of focus. On a radio talk show during the election campaign, he was asked by a caller what he would do about Paris's serious pollution problem if elected. "This is a problem of public transport," he said. "If fewer people drove their cars into town, and took public transport instead, we could conquer the pollution problem." So far, so good. An ecologist could put it better: why don't people use buses and subways? Because of the large number of daily "aggressions" and "insecurity." Everyone knows that in Le Pen's doublespeak "insecurity" can be read as "immigrant." Thus, with a deft sleight of hand, he is able to pass along the implicit message: pollution = Arabs.

The Front has found other uses for "ecology" as well. As Bruno Mégret puts it, "Why fight for the preservation of animal species while at the same time tolerating the disappearance of certain human races due to general crossbreeding?" The "father" of modern ecology, according to Le Pen, is the Nobel Prize-winning chemist Alexis Carrel, who, with

*Front propaganda tends to inflate the number of immigrants in France, putting the figure at 10 percent of the population and suggesting that the majority of foreigners are from North Africa. The last census, in 1994, put the figure at 6.5 percent out of a total population of 58 million. An educated guess would be that approximately half of this number is North African, with the balance being Spanish, Italians, Portuguese, and black Africans from such former French colonies as Gabon and Senegal.*



r Pétain, promoted the idea of  
ced euthanasia via gas chamber  
riminals and the deranged. In  
non, as in other French towns,  
mpaign is under way to change  
treet name Rue Alexis Carrel;  
this push has been unsuccessful  
is largely due to the  
Front's growing power.

Aside from its traditional hatred  
abs, the Front has found and de-  
voted another ideological ene-  
-American culture. Seen as a  
on of "cosmopolitanism," the  
n enemy of "national identity,"  
egenerate United States, with its  
d races and libertine culture;  
to impose "l'American way of  
on Europe and in particular on  
e. The inheritance of this "coca-  
zation" is, according to Le Pen,  
ghettos and ethnic violence à  
ikee. "Fast food is mounting as  
ly as immigration" is a typical  
n, and the Front's election litera-  
peaks of defending "the French  
age against the mounting hege-  
of American expressions." Ex-  
Bruno Mégret, "[O]ur model of

civilization is far superior to that of  
the United States of America, far su-  
perior to those who are trying to colo-  
nize us."

Public enemy number one is rap  
music. The reasons for this are obvi-  
ous: rap is anti-establishment, anti-po-  
lice, black, and clearly American in  
origin. But the Front has found a way  
to play the issue against Arabs as well.  
Mégret again: "Rap is one of the cul-  
tural consequences of North African  
immigration in France; it's contrary to  
our identity as Frenchmen." Never  
mind that the majority of rappers are  
second or third generation and that  
the language they rap in is French.

The group Suprême NTM—  
which stands for *Nique Ta Mère*, or  
Fuck Your Mother—has become the  
scapegoat for this hostility. Sons of  
the suburban ghetto (*les cités*), and  
strongly influenced by their Ameri-  
can counterparts N.W.A. (Niggaz  
With Attitude), NTM built its ca-  
reer by way of an obligatory hatred  
of the French police. At a concert  
in 1995, organized to protest the  
election of the Front in Toulon,  
NTM verbally insulted the officers

present, between refrains of their  
song "Police":

The fascists are not only in Toulon.  
... They're standing right behind you at  
the entrance. These people are a threat  
to our freedom. Our enemies are the  
men in blue. ... We piss on them.

When the police took NTM to  
court for outrage against the public  
forces of order, a heavy fine was ex-  
pected. But in addition, the group  
was sentenced to six months in  
prison and banned from rapping for  
six months subsequent to their re-  
lease, a judgment not seen in the  
French cultural sphere since the  
middle of the nineteenth century.

I have a hard time reconciling all of  
this U.S. bashing with what I know of  
my mechanic, who still watches *Dallas*  
reruns and takes his kids for a "Beeg  
Mac" now and then at the local  
"Macdo." But it would be just as diffi-  
cult to convince the leftists at the lo-  
cal *Ras l'Front* ("Fed up with the  
Front") that this man doesn't wear  
jackboots and may not even under-  
stand the neofascist craziness grinding  
away at his perfectly reasonable fears.



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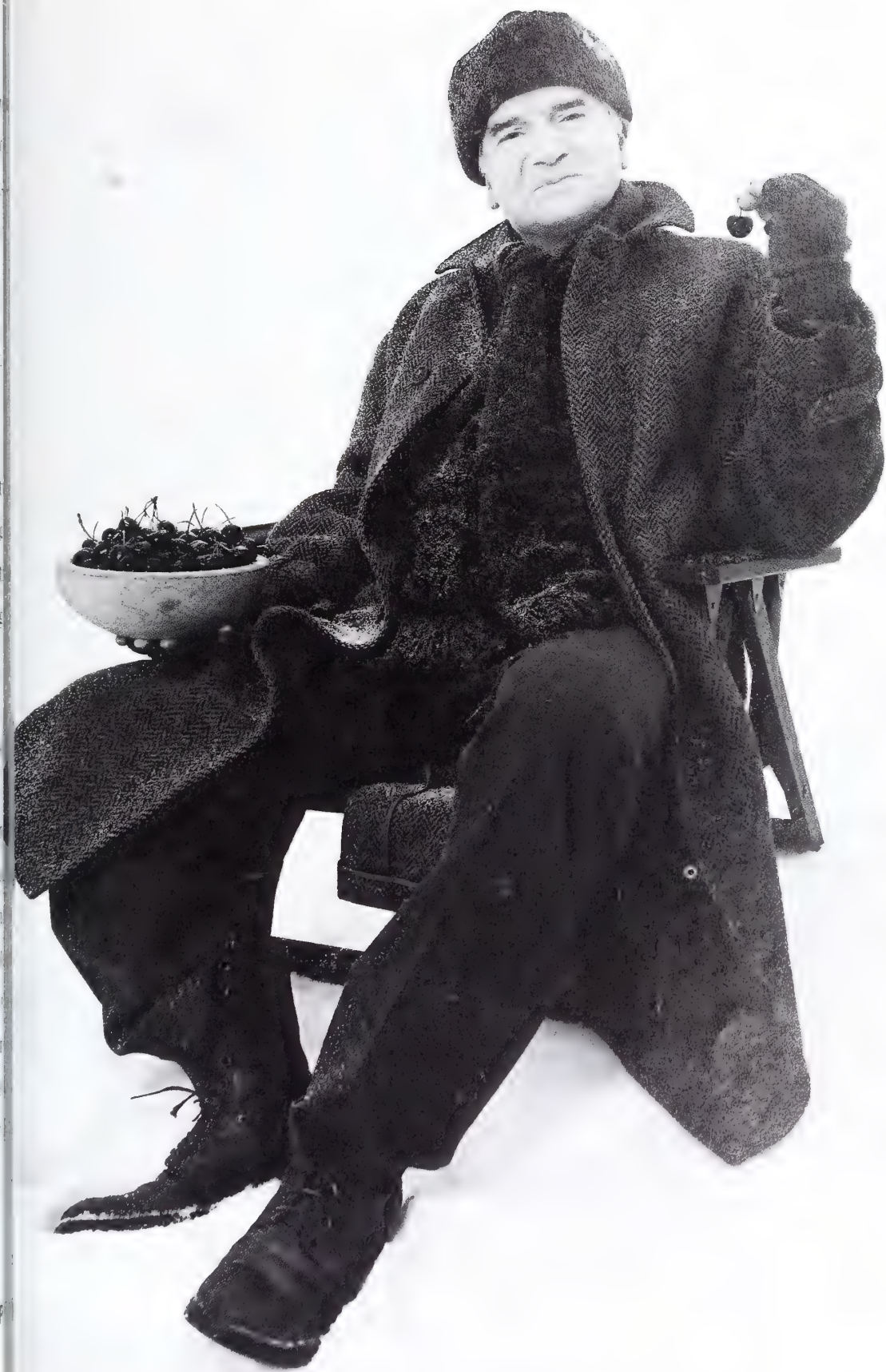
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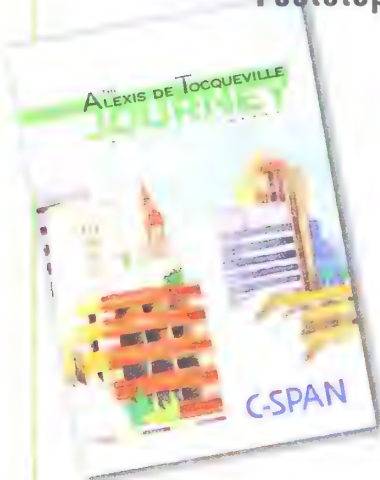
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He doesn't hate foreigners, but he is genuinely worried about unemployment and the violence in his children's schools. He's a man of the Mediterranean, fiercely independent and suspicious of any wind blowing from Paris. And there's the rub: if the National Front continues to sweep city after city, it will happen not because French people everywhere are turning into fascists but because they have no real idea what they are letting themselves in for. Ignorance, not cruelty, is what allows the Front to thrive, and I have little doubt about the party's ability to install the next round of fascist mayors here in the Mediterranean basin on the shoulders of simple people like the man who fixes my car.

**M**y Avignon neighbors tend to rear up when confronted with the Front's "fascism." They see such charges as indicative of a Paris-inspired conspiracy against them, and this only tends to deepen their commitment to the party. They seem unaware that Le Pen's long-term national program bears a chilling resemblance to the Vichy "*Révolution Nationale*," even though some of them are the sons and daughters of local Resistance fighters who battled the Nazis in the nearby Provençal forests. I run into my Front neighbors at our local vegetable market all the time. Thugs? No. Mrs. Average Frenchwoman, a local schoolmarm, the butcher's wife:

"Will you sign our petition against giving the vote to immigrants?"

"I'm an immigrant myself, Madame."

"Oh, but you, you're the right kind of immigrant."

Meaning I obviously don't hail from North Africa. Immigrant = Arab. "Immigrants" are those who "invade," and Jean-Marie Le Pen has made his choice clear: "I'd rather be invaded by Germans than by Arabs. At least they had Goethe and Schiller. The Arabs have never done anything memorable."

True, tasting the possibility of continuing electoral victory, and not wanting to frighten off still-wavering constituents, Le Pen has banned all swastikas and "Heil

Hitler"s from Front rallies. and death have eliminated most of the old Führer nostalgics from party ranks, their places now taken by a new generation with no connection to the Vichyists and German agents among the founding fathers of the party in the Seventies. Front candidates for the regional elections nonetheless include Jean-Jacques Susini, one of the leaders of the OAS (Organisation de l'Armée Secrète), a terrorist organization responsible for attacks in both Algeria and mainland France during the early Sixties, as well as for an assassination attempt on Charles de Gaulle; several members of the far-right, anti-Semitic group *L'Unité Française*; and numerous Nazis and Holocaust deniers.

If the Teutonic image doesn't do what is essentially a Mediterranean movement only a stone's throw from the Italian border, many Front rallies give off the distinct odor of Duce-ism. The National Front, in fact, is a three-color flag adapted from that of the now defunct Italian neofascist party (which, depending on whom you ask, stands for either *Movimento Sociale Italiano* or *Mussolini, Sei Indivisibile*). And the similarities do not end there. A typical party rally, well-known to most local anti-Front demonstrators, is to have its own security men pretend to be police, complete with clothes policemen, complete with walkie-talkies, leather gloves, truncheons. At the recent national convention in Strasbourg, these provocateurs isolated, shoved, and frisked several of the protesters. This practice continues wherever people come to jeer the Front.

Nationwide, the Front's support stands at a "mere" 15 percent. In the south it is nearly double that, and in some constituencies it has been approached, and even topped, 50 percent. I often wonder what it would take to push the percentage high enough to sweep the Front to power here in Avignon. Orange, after all, is only half an hour away, and there are the same fiery southern voters, quite a few of them second- or third-generation immigrants from nearby Spanish and Italian frontiers.



are deeply suspicious of newer  
gners." It could take anything,  
pose—an Islamic republic in  
ia forcing thousands of Arabs  
ek refuge in France, another  
wave in the suburban areas, or  
(a likely candidate) the relent-  
rive toward a unified European  
ncy, which most people here  
der a grave insult. But the truth  
haps more frightening: the  
's ascent may require no cata-  
t all. In a country that, after  
ears, still has not completely  
d out which side it was on in  
World War II, it could  
simply happen.

ne recent morning at 8:00, I  
my teenage daughter to the lo-  
ycée, which overlooks the  
e and the Pont d'Avignon of  
y rhyme. Just outside the gates,  
t the stream of adolescents  
walking by, I noticed a small  
of interlopers, alert and active,  
g from student to student with  
sed professional aplomb, talk-  
imated to some, carefully  
ng others. They were too well-

dressed, too conspicuous to be the  
drug dealers that haunt all big-town  
schools. Besides, they were handing  
out leaflets. This was the *Front Na-  
tional de la Jeunesse*, the party's youth  
sector, on early-morning recruitment  
duty. My daughter explained that  
they wouldn't dare show up at  
lunchtime or after school. But at  
8:00 A.M., everyone was too zonked  
to chase them away.

By their own admission, these  
Front kids had been to youth camps  
where "Ride of the Valkyries" was  
piped into their bedrooms at 6:00  
A.M. sharp. Maybe that's why they  
were so wide awake by 8:00, ready to  
confront the inevitable avalanche of  
hostility. And with such efficiency:  
my daughter told me that once,  
when their leaflets were confiscated  
by teachers, the group returned the  
next day with a new one, titled  
"*Prof ou Flic?*" ("Teacher or Cop?"),  
that damned the adults for interven-  
ing. Not the Hitler Jugend, no, but  
certainly a well-oiled machine, and  
one with its own student unions, its  
own summer camps, its own youth  
clubs and discos.

Before long, the recruiters had  
slithered back into the shadows.  
They'd learned not to outstay their  
welcome—three to five minutes,  
max. But that's all they really need-  
ed. Of the 2,000 or so youngsters en-  
tering those gates that morning, per-  
haps several hundred would keep the  
leaflets and read that the only way to  
ensure security in our high schools is  
for every student to join the youth  
organization of the National Front.  
Of these, perhaps fifty or so would  
have been victims of "aggression"  
and would understand the implicit  
equation Insecurity = Arabs. And for  
some of them, the temptation to be-  
long would be all too real.

My daughter assured me that the  
majority of her high school friends  
were ready to turn *La Jeunesse* away,  
by force if necessary. Maybe so, and  
maybe their mothers and fathers and  
aunts and uncles would be kicked out  
of their newly "liberated" city offices  
in the next elections. She doesn't  
have the historical perspective, my  
daughter. She can be optimistic, but  
I know better. Sooner or later, the  
Front will be back. ■

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Our thing about the Cosa Nostra  
By Albert Mobilio

Among the books discussed in this essay:

*Underboss: Sammy the Bull Gravano's Story of Life in the Mafia*, by Peter Maas. HarperCollins. 301 pages. \$25.

*Wiseguy: Life in a Mafia Family*, by Nicholas Pileggi. Pocket Books. 289 pages. \$6.99.

*Casino*, by Nicholas Pileggi. Pocket Books. 348 pages. \$6.99.

*Joe Dogs: The Life & Crimes of a Mobster*, by Joseph "Joe Dogs" Iannuzzi. Pocket Books. 322 pages. \$6.50.

*Donnie Brasco: My Undercover Life in the Mafia*, by Joseph D. Pistone. Signet. 413 pages. \$6.99.

*Get Shorty*, by Elmore Leonard. Dell. 359 pages. \$6.50.

*The Juror*, by George Dawes Green. Warner Books. 446 pages. \$6.99.

*The Last Don*, by Mario Puzo. Ballantine. 502 pages. \$7.99.

*Gotti: Rise and Fall*, by Jerry Capeci and Gene Mustain. Onyx. 444 pages. \$6.99.

*Capone: The Man and the Era*, by Laurence Bergreen. Touchstone. 619 pages. \$16.

Walking through Greenwich Village a few years ago, I passed Vincent "Chin" Gigante, the reputed boss ("reputed" being the necessary, if comical, fig leaf of technical innocence) of the Genovese crime family in New York City. A shrunken old man in bathrobe and slippers, with unbrushed hair and a clueless stare, he stood in a shop doorway, shielded by a trio of beef slabs in knit shirts who scuffed the sidewalk and smoked. I gave them all wide berth, tamping down the urge to gape openly at this wizened former boxer who once weighed 300 pounds and now shuffled around these streets like a punch-drunk has-been. His bulked-up associates looked like planets that had no choice but to or-

bit a collapsed star. Prosecutors had long maintained that Gigante's ad-dled state was a ruse to keep him out of court—a successful one until he was ruled competent to stand trial last year and convicted this July of racketeering and conspiracy to murder. As I passed "Chin" that afternoon, I felt a slight yet unmistakable shiver. It was the excitement, I'm sure, of seeing someone famous. But it was also that rarer frisson, the one you get from seeing a killer.

And how we love that shiver. Especially when the murderers dress in black, wield a mean Fifth Amendment, and have a taste for great scungilli. Especially when they are Mafia. One need only check the literary record to measure our devotion: a flood of novels, confessionals, histories, and true-crime books (the Library of Congress lists several hundred Mob-related titles), and still

every season sees an Explosive Tell-All Mafia Thriller. Indeed, the Mafia owned a copyright itself, the Men of Respect would need to make a killing, except the book rack. And, of course, box office.

Mob stories fall out as either or countermyth. Fiction necessarily belongs in the first category; a portage, biography, and confessions, in the second. If novelists or operatic killers, dressed for stage, true-crime books promise a real lowdown, passed on by masters, their kids, ex-cops, or currently in the witness-protection program. The very salable idea that a web of mystery—specifically *omertà*, the Sicilian code of silence—is being swept away in drives nonfiction Mafiana. In *The Princess*, Chicago boss Sam Licca was plumbed in print

Albert Mobilio is the author of *The Geographic*, a book of poems. He is currently at work on a collection of stories.

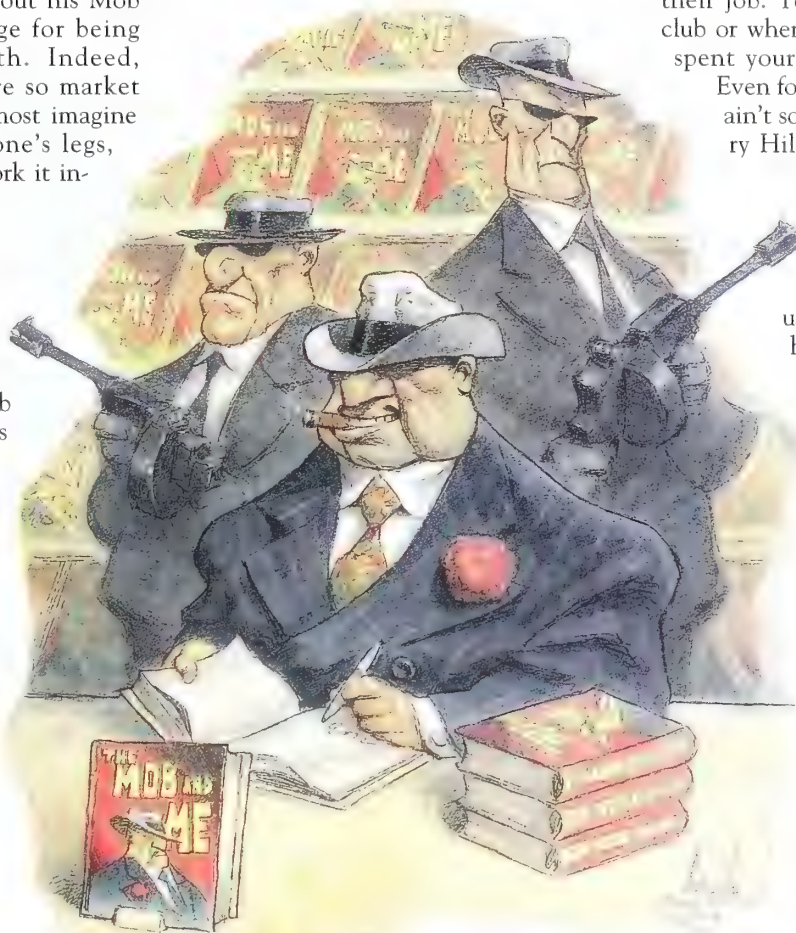


nter; Nicholas Pileggi has  
ed two bestsellers, *Wiseguy* and  
o, from former Mafia associates  
y Hill and Frank Rosenthal;  
me FBI agent Joseph Pistone  
ed *Donnie Brasco*, a behind-  
polyester-curtain account of his  
undercover; and in *Joe Dogs:*  
*Life & Crimes of a Mobster*,  
h Lannuzzi tells the salutary  
f how he ratted out his Mob  
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ties Mob guys are so market  
that you can almost imagine  
breaking someone's legs,  
going home to work it in-  
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d then there is  
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ice is looking for  
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and the result is  
liar form of lit-  
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Former FBI  
William F.  
er Jr. titled his  
book *Accardo:*  
*enuine Godfather*.  
rst sentence of  
*Autobiography of*  
*man*, by "Joey,"  
is "Fuck The God-  
father."

e Mafia has sung for its supper  
its inception in America, the  
celebrity handily overwhelm-  
nturies of tradition. After set-  
he standard for gangster as  
showboat, holding press con-  
es and even turning up on the  
of *Time* magazine, Capone  
d his autobiography to wary  
ork editors (this was, after all,  
and later considered convert-  
s notoriety into cash as an  
elist. Even a solid, tucked-

under-the-brim guy like Charles  
"Lucky" Luciano, an architect of the  
modern Mafia and the first *capo di*  
*tutti capi*, caught the bug. During his  
last years in exile in Naples, he col-  
laborated on a screenplay about his  
life and was about to go into produc-  
tion on it when he was strongly ad-  
vised to forget it by certain critics



back in  
New York. In 1980,  
Mafia capo Joseph Bonanno  
did, in fact, write his autobiogra-  
phy—*A Man of Honor*—in which he  
detailed the entire structure of New  
York's Five Families, providing au-  
thentic inside dope that fueled pros-  
ecutors for years. Upon the book's  
publication, Gambino family *con-*  
*siglière* Joe Gallo offered his own  
close reading on an FBI tape: "It  
makes you wonder. Is this son of a  
bitch senile, or is he just a fucking  
nut? . . . This is a new kind of plea  
bargain, or what? Go to the slammer

or write your memoirs and make  
your friends look lousy?"

But perhaps the biggest secret  
spilled in these books is that criminal  
life is, apparently, a bore. FBI  
agent Pistone recounts the epic tedi-  
um that reigned in the back room of  
a Brooklyn storefront where "half-  
ass" wiseguys played gin and bullshitted  
for hours on end: "The mob was  
their job. You got up, went to the  
club or wherever you hung out, and  
spent your day with those guys."

Even for the bosses the high life  
ain't so high. In *Wiseguy*, Henry  
Hill recalls Mob boss Paul

Vario putting a sur-  
veillance camera  
outside the win-  
dow of his Brook-  
lyn apartment: "He  
used to sit on the bed in  
his underwear for hours  
trying to spot G-men.  
'There's one,' he'd  
say. 'The guy be-  
hind the tree. Did-  
ja see him?'" The  
reader is often left  
with the impression  
that Mafiosi are pret-  
ty much just stressed-  
out collection-agency  
hacks with terrible  
tempers.

This is not quite  
the outlaw fantasy  
you call upon while  
sitting at your desk  
sorting through yester-  
day's Post-it notes.  
What you want is  
something like Elmore

Leonard's *Get Shorty* or  
George Dawes Green's *The Ju-*  
*ror*, both recent Mafia novels starring  
preternaturally cool enforcers who  
could burn a hole through a pad of  
Post-its with a glance.

In *The Juror*, Green gives us "the  
Teacher," a Mob killer/philoso-  
pher/aesthete who is as likely to be  
found sitting in a half-lotus position  
as torturing someone with an elec-  
tric cattle prod. He tells one blood-  
ied victim, "If your spirit ran *with*  
the Tao, I swear to you that no bliss  
could elude you." The Teacher  
wields a lordly omnipotence, assur-  
ing a female juror in a Mafia trial,



"Anywhere. End of the earth, we'll find you." This is the gangster as Dark Angel, who, like Milton's Satan, is fascinatingly evil. The all too real "Joe Dogs" hardly fascinates, but he does know how to win friends and influence people:

"[I]f you don't do what I tell you, I'll kill your father. I won't kill you, but I'll maim you. And you will have to live with the fact that you got your father killed. We will even let your mother live, but let her know the reason her husband got killed."

Sure, he may be blowing smoke, but he can afford to do it sans style, in much the same way that he orders confederates to teach someone a lesson: "I told the spades to break one leg, smash the knuckles on his right hand, and blacken both eyes." No grandiose threat or Taoist hoodoo here; this beating is strictly business.

Although explicit commands may get results, they read too clunkily for the skillful novelist. Elmore Leonard's Chili Palmer, in *Get Shorty*, is a winsome, gentle shylock who rarely raises an angry hand. Instead, his technique is the deftly tuned psyche-out: "You never tell the guy what could happen to him. Let him use his imagination, he'll think of something worse." In answer to the question "Who the fuck are you?" he's ready with the cryptic yet threatening "I'm the one telling you how it is," which sounds a lot like God's tough-guy reply—"I am that I am"—to Moses. Garbed in natural fabrics, Chili and the Teacher are well-rounded, articulate achievers and thus suitable as objects of projection for middle-class power fantasies, unlike the *fuhgedaboudit* knuckle draggers most nonfiction books deliver. Mafia fiction offers the eloquent threat, one you might air out while pushing for a raise; Mafia fact serves up body parts in garbage bags.

Still, whether delighting in the romance of the Cosa Nostra or a grittier workaday syndicate, fans recognize the Mob for the meta-story it is—one that provides a frame for dozens of other cozily familiar yarns, many of them about belonging.

Think of Mobsters testifying in a courtroom or before Congress, always accompanied by labyrinthine charts tracing the hierarchy of Mafia families, the capos, and their *caporegimes*. The balance of power in this shadow government readily compels attention because we can't help but wonder, as we might about Bohemian Grove or Yale's Skull and Bones, not only how you get in but how you get the cool nickname.

That's why the initiation ritual is such a staple of Mafia storytelling. Its details were first revealed by turncoat Joe Valachi in his 1968 confessional narrative, written by Peter Maas and published as *The Valachi Papers*. Sat down in 1930 by then boss Salvatore Maranzano (a punctilious, erudite man who read Caesar in Latin and had once studied for the priesthood), Valachi was shown a gun and a knife and told in Italian, "This represents that you live by the gun and the knife . . . and you die by the gun and the knife." Next Maranzano set fire to a picture of a saint and put it in Valachi's cupped hands and had him repeat, "This is the way I will burn if I betray the secret of this Cosa Nostra." Finally his trigger finger was pricked with a pin, to create a blood bond with his new family. In *Underboss: Sammy the Bull Gravano's Story of Life in the Mafia*, Maas elicited much the same tale from another eventual turncoat, whose ceremony took place nearly fifty years later. A portentous mix of ethnic hokum and kid stuff, these hieratic rites spark the imagination in part because these "made men" can be so handy with an ice pick. But the rituals owe their effectiveness to more than blood; the shadows and accented whispers invest mere greed and viciousness with the illusion of meaning as surely as the ever-popular "kiss of death" bestowed upon traitorous friends recalls the betrayal of Christ.

A tribe with rituals must have a sacred language, and Mafia authors, even those with tin ears, can't help but chime out the gruff jangle of *dese* and *dose*. At its most inventive, Mobspeak is a poetry of the oblique. The very name Cosa Nostra translates simply as "this thing of ours." (Present here is a level of knotty ab-

straction approaching Heidegger's notion of "the thingness of thing.") "Whacking" better connotes the paddling of a toddler than its six shots to the back of the head. "Clipping" a rival means more a little off the top. To corrupt judge or jury member, some "makes the reach," a mechanical metaphorically apt way of noting the gulf between being "in the life" and out of it. "Made" guys, or "business" men, know to identify a fellow member to another made guy as a "friend of ours" and a nonmember as a "friend of mine."

Such neutral, prosecutor-prosecutor cabulary often produces a Seuss-like phraseology. Sevenside grade dropout Capone, we learn from Laurence Bergreen's biography, could craft beauties: about a sevenside Mobster he had eliminated, he quipped that "his head got cut off from his hat." Hit man Gravano slouches either. Of his duties as John Gotti he says, "John barked a little bit." Mafia fiction can hardly do justice to this telegraphic eloquence. Put *The Last Don*, gets carried away with his gangland patois, coining original symbolic terms like "Communion" for murdered bodies that disfigure and "Confirmation" for those likely to be found. Real Mobspeak is somewhat more direct: "You tell the punk," Gotti once announced on an FBI tape, "I, me, John Gotti . . . sever your motherfucking head. You cocksucker!"

An undeniable humor attends the oxymoron of law-abiding mayhem: the idea that baseball-bat punning, dope peddling, and loan-sharking should all be carried out with businesslike vigor, with an eye to public relations and the bottom line. That, as Capone sagely opined at a press conference, "there is no business for all of us without keeping each other like animals in the streets." Valachi recalled the execution of many Mob guys in the Fifties for being "unfit": "twenty-five contracts . . . ended in commissions, slight wounds, and bodies left around in the street." Hill points out a macabre attention to etiquette in *Wiseguy*, noting that when one Mobster's son was wh-

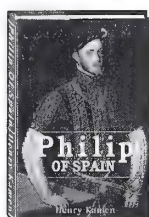


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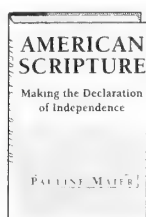
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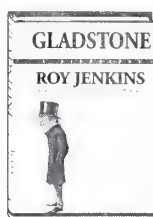
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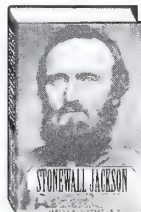
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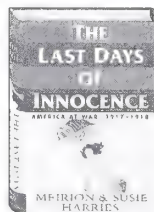


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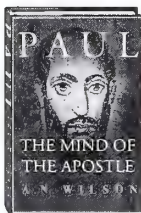
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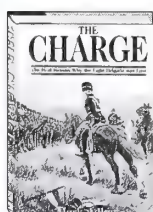
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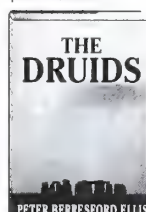
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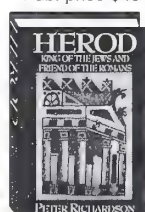
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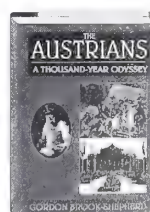
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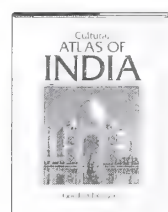
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for misbehaving, the executioners "left the kid's face clean so there could be an open casket at the funeral." The broken-toothed gears of Mobster ethics allow innocence and malignancy to coexist peacefully in the same conscience, and because Mafia evil appears safely sealed within its own world, unconnected to ours, we can laugh at the gangster's moral bifurcation in a way that we cannot when presented with stories about, say, Himmler being a wonderful father. True evil, we seem to feel, demands a familiar victim—specifically, one of us. But as long as the wiseguys are killing other wiseguys, that's entertainment.

**R**ule busting is a national birthright, and we reserve a particular affection for rebels with a cause—especially if that cause is cash. As Hill puts it, "Anyone who stood waiting his turn on the American pay line was beneath contempt.... To wiseguys, 'working guys' were already dead." However, since most of us are on that line, we do expect the nobler virtues to be paid some lip service. Perhaps this is why, in movies and novels, the antisocial attitude gets muted, if not turned inside out, when Mafia bosses are portrayed as pillars of the community. Forever doling out such Rotary Club platitudes as "friendship is everything" or "a man who is not a father to his children can never be a real man," Puzo's Don Corleone could easily be a GOP candidate for the U.S. Senate. After all, he's for unrestrained capitalism, family values, and the death penalty. Capone, a rags-to-riches bootstrapper who beat two men to death with a bat, once bragged, "I have always found a Republican among my friends and a few percent Republicans." Mafiosi are tough on crime too—at least other people's. After FBI agents stole back a car that Mob killer "Lefty Guns" Ruggiero had stolen from them, Pistone recalls Lefty's reaction: "Fucking Puerto Ricans! ... They musta seen the Christmas presents in the back seat, that's why they took it." He sounds like the stock suburbanite on the evening news shaking his head woefully and saying, "This

used to be such a nice place to live." After all, the theft took place near Manhattan's Little Italy, a locale generally thought to be watched over by an unseen, all-seeing eye.

Most Mobsters aren't really getting over on the straight world to the extent that the loss of some Christmas presents doesn't sting. Except for the top capos, your average Mafia soldier puts in long hours for highly speculative returns, without medical benefits, pension, or sick leave. If he's a "good earner," he's expected to pass a substantial "piece" on up the family tree. Hence, the Mob tale embraces another irresistible saga—that of the haves and have-nots. "All these big puffers with their cigars and pinkie rings," Pistone quotes one crypto-Marxist hood complaining, "they're taking down all the money. It's gotta change." Capeci and Mustain detail up-and-coming Gotti's resentment at Paul Castellano, the brother-in-law of legendary Don Carlo Gambino, for having inherited his position. Castellano was born to Mafia royalty, while Gotti grew up dirt poor, one of thirteen children, in the South Bronx. His rise from a tenement to the cover of *Time* is a Horatio Alger tale, except for the less-than-inspirational fact that his ascent was achieved via six bullets to Castellano's head.

The tabloids and television news alike celebrated Gotti's entrepreneurial panache. One newspaper deemed him a "frontier risk-taker"; another suggested that he be named superintendent of schools. And the public agreed: he was asked for his autograph in restaurants and eventually received thousands of fan letters in jail. In gangland, class struggle isn't a frustrating, incremental process that takes decades; rather, it's swift, decisive, and dressed in blood. For a grudge-holding, perennially snubbed citizenry, the Mafia story enacts an effective path to social change.

In *Wiseguy*, Pileggi describes the best candidates for criminal success:

They were not the smartest kids in the neighborhood. They were not born the richest. They weren't even the toughest. In fact, they lacked almost all the necessary talents that

might have helped them satisfy the appetites of their dreams, except for one—their talent for violence.

It is the Mafia boss's unreflective exercise of primitive will that gives him a figure of epic stature, and tries about men with that sin character flaw—Capone, Luc Giancana, Costello, Gambino, Gotti—link us to tales once too firelight of underworld wraith vengeance. Since Homer, there has been one of the hardest-working gimmicks in showbiz, one that succeeds in comedy as ably as drama because seen as a push-button affair, free of psychological complexities. When Allen's *Bullets over Broadway* dims when a Mafia hit man identifies the boss's girlfriend because she's an actress. Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* features not one but two executions with no discernible effect in the chuckles.

In both drama and true crime, the ceremonial staging of the hit conceals the ugliness of the deed. What we call of the killings in Coppola's *The Godfather* is their cinematic grace: baptism crosscut with machine-gun fire—while Capeci and Mustain count of the Castellano rubout narrates because its military precision coupled with farcical detail: the men wore "identical tan trench coats and cossack-like fur hats." Like the nesses to the crime, we remember only the strange garb, not the faces, and not the two men—father and husband—dead in the street beneath the theatricality lies a deeper pull: our distinct suspicion that these petty, money-grubbing wars are, in fact, exemplars of a less ur-struggle, one properly dressed of morality's window dressing pared down to Darwinian essentials. Mafia stories provide a rigged measuring stick by reassuring us that life truly is nasty, brutish, and short, and thus affording us forgiveness for our own shortcomings. After what's a little tax chiseling or marital sex compared to cold-blooded murder?

**M**ost closely resembling a monarch, the Mafia boss conveys images that are decidedly pre-



c. Whenever Gambino appeared at a café in Little Italy, a crowd would immediately form outside. By one, supplicants would pass through bodyguards to approach the king of Bosses with their request. Regarded as the memorable opening scene in Coppola's film, the narrative antecedent for this audience of onlookers lies in both regal history and Arthurian legend. Albert Anastasia, New York's "Lord High Executioner" in the 1930s and '40s, ruled with such increasing capriciousness that he was eventually dethroned. It happened to be watching television one night when he saw news of a young Brooklyn man who had killed the notorious bank robber James J. Sutton after seeing his wanted poster. "I hate squealers!" Anastasia roared, and he instructed one of his men to "hit" the guy. The result, less attention-grabbing murder than condemned by Anastasia's fellow bosses, who subsequently had "High" gunned down in a barroom. We've heard this story before, of course, only the angry sovereign was Henry II and his victim was Thomas à Becket.

In his age of political and judicial crisis, the appeal of a despot hardly surprises. In September 1995, after a judge's ninety-four-year-old mother was mugged in Greenwich Village, a remorseful suspect apologized in court through his lawyer, saying he was sorry the situation occurred and acknowledged that it was wrong. The newspapers, one of which labeled him the "Nitwit mugger," treated the case humorously and with the assumption that while the justice system could barely elicit admissions of guilt, let alone apologies, an Italian in pajamas could surely make those trains run on time. No wonder most readers nodded knowingly at this piece of news, not only confirming the mystique of the Mafia but also signaling some small understanding for a draconian king. Who wouldn't want to live in a town where the muggers say they're sorry?

The Mafia's ability to intimidate is perhaps its most potent theatrical lure. In *Get Shorty*, Gene Hackman gives a movie star a lesson in giving "the look," telling him,

"Put it in your eyes, 'You're mine, asshole,' without saying it." The actor gets it wrong and Chili Remonstrates,

"You're squinting, like you're trying to look mean or you need glasses. Look at me. I'm thinking, You're mine, I fuckin' own you. What I'm not doing is feeling anything about it one way or the other. You understand? You're not a person to me..."

Of course, if you just want to spook your opponent, you can turn on the old *malòcchio*, the evil eye. When Gravano testified against Gotti, a young man who had once been very close to the turncoat was sent into the courtroom to glare at him. Prosecutors took this threat seriously enough to force the young man back to the second row and have federal agents block his view. All this heavy eye contact may recall high school drama-club productions, but the self-conscious spectacle of gangsters mimicking De Niro mimicking them testifies to the dizzying power of Mob entertainment. After all, the evil-eye bit in the Gotti trial appeared to be inspired by a scene in *The Godfather*. And Gotti's trial, much to the Dapper Don's delight, was attended by Mickey Rourke and Anthony Quinn, both of whom claimed to be researching upcoming roles.

It's always been hard to say where the movies leave off and the real hoodlums begin. As early as 1928, bona fide bootleggers served as "technical consultants" to the makers of the film *The Racket*, one of the first to be modeled on Capone. (Having given away too many trade secrets, though, the bootleggers tried to block the film's release by threatening to kill its stars.) Before he was thirty-two, Capone had inspired two more movies—*Little Caesar* and *Scarface*—and was the undisputed template for gangster iconography. (Ever the social conservative, though, he worried that "these gang movies are making a lot of kids want to be tough guys.") But it was Puzo's book and Coppola's movie that together became the *Hamlet* of Mob dramas. *The Godfather* gave us what felt like the definitive look at the Mafia and served as a bang-up recruiting vehicle

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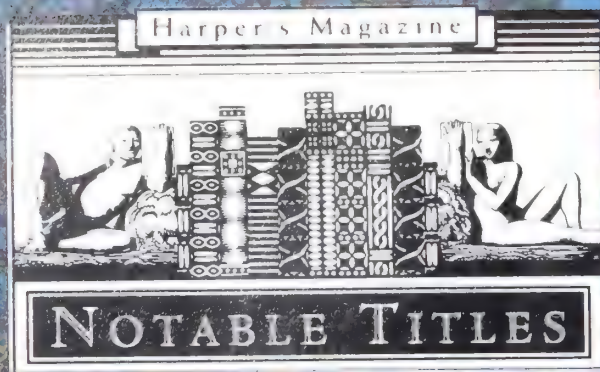
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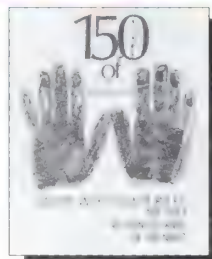
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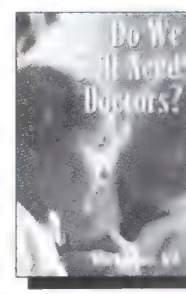
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Even the FBI mourns the Mafia's supposed demise, because the Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese crime groups are terra incognita when compared with the Italians. All in all, things ain't what they used to be, and who doesn't feel that way? The loss of a good thing—"We were given paradise on earth, but we fucked it all up," says one goodfella in Pileggi's *Casino*—is another longstanding archetype. It's forever curtains for the Mafia, and all the while Mafia movies and books soldier on.

If the Mafia is, in fact, on the ropes, it is there in large part because Mobsters can't help telling one another the tough-guy tale they fell in

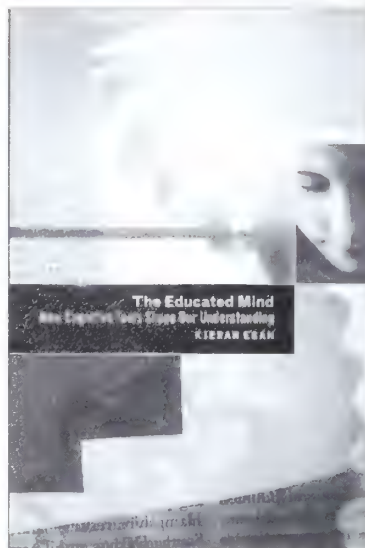


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CLUES: ACROSS: 10. t-hr.-all; 11. \*; 13. rev.; 14. a-s.s.; 16. wick(ed); 18. pa(r)-w(rev.); 20. gum (rev.)-e; 21. s-(n)k (th,dl)-; 23. s-o-n; 26. homonym; 27. red; 31. (flun)it-(m); 33. wal(nu); 35. homonym; 36. \*; 37. o-min(o)us; 39. again(rev.)-s; 43. L.(ex)h.-cog-rap-her. DOWN: 1. \*; 2. ea-; 3. al(om)-; 4. (s)lower(s); 5. \*; 6. R-U-B; 7. emu(h)ic; 8. me-ow; 9. pap-a; 10. t(rag)ic; 12. \*; 15. vi(bra)N.T.; 17. cal(-)lu(m); 19. two mngs; 22. he-s; 24. (t)oil; 25. t(LC)-bug; 26. (d)el(-); 28. \*; 29. h(d)el(-)o(-)u(-)sion(-)out(-); 33. hom-; 34. (t)rev(-)o(-)go; 38. Sappo; 39. m(rev.)-a; 40. t(-); 41. fra(m)e(-)rev.; 42. two mngs.

SEPTEMBER 2006 REFRACTIVE ACROSTIC (NO. 1) 15

Robert S. Newberry was about a group of scientists who were studying the life cycle of a mineral, and also mineral, and then regenerate itself.

At the top of the quotation, the name of the author must appear in all caps, followed by the title of the work, together with the page number. The citation itself will appear as follows: "Double Acrostic No. 178," *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. 10, No. 6, pp. 9-10. The full reference to *Harper's* will also include the date, October 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened up the magazine on October 10, and the random selection was made on October 11. The solution will be printed in the November issue of *Harper's*. The winning solution will be published in the December issue. Write your solution to Double Acrostic (No. 176) are Robert Loy, Charleston, South Carolina; George W. Smith, New York City; and Amy Pearson, Los Angeles.



os over the steering wheel,  
e the gun. Take the cannoli."  
ascination with Mob tales pro-  
the surest clue to what makes  
ck: Taking place in an idiosyn-  
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s fitfully alongside the survival  
fittest, these recitations of  
and guns satisfy a need to see  
ves in an elementary, id-like  
We come to understand the act  
order—not done for love, not  
hate, but for "business"—as an  
pable, necessary part of what  
is do. And, finally, our trifling  
dilemmas can be neatly re-  
in the home team's favor in  
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actment of the will to power.  
its decorative trappings, it is  
a simple story about our deepest  
unrestrained self-gratification.  
Mafia dream is the American  
the one where you get to have  
cannoli and eat it too. ■

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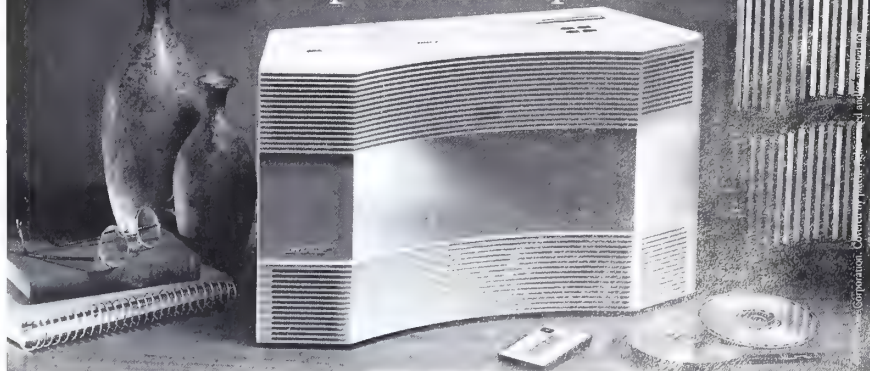
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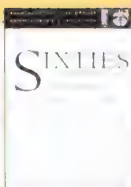


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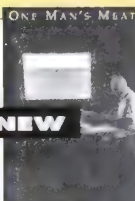
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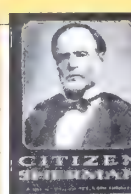
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# FEATHER AND BONE

By Mark Slouka

I was three, no more, when I spotted for the first time the paleness of his shirt moving like some small ghost against the darkening trees. Even now, the image remains, fixed in the scent of moldering wood: a man standing on a stone porch at dusk, his left hand crossed below his chest, smoking a pipe. It's June. Unaware of us approaching through the darkness under the trees, he stares ahead into the gathering night as though the past itself were engraved there, as though the dip and weave of swallows in the last light were inscribing his fate on the disembodied air. From the path below, holding my father's hand, I see him above us. Fireflies rise around him in slow, languid gusts like sparks from some missing fire.

It's been nearly twenty years now since I last saw Rheinhold Černý, since my feet, barefoot or sneakered, negotiated the footpath to the cabin on the hill. From where it left the dirt road to where it opened into the meadow, that path was as familiar to me as my own mother's face. I could have run it blind, stutter-stepping through the marshy



grass, swinging wide around the poison ivy, hitting the plank over the brook, right, left, right, then up and over the boulder with its little opaque windows of mica before leaping the strange, jointed root on the second turn past the shed... as though my feet, hitting

earth and stone and wood stamped, by some alchemy, correspondence, each and every ture into the soil of my he

It would be Mrs. Černý first, standing in the garden in an oddly formal dress, a wide straw hat, pulling by past their prime, loosening with a spade. She'd turn straighten when I called from the bottom of the meadow, then up with me through the grass into the chill shade of the cottage, where she'd pour tea with honey and ply me pieces of *jahodový táč*—strawberry tart—that left crisp flaky pastry on my lips and chin. The cottage itself, always dark, the cut flowers still bloom on the windowsills and the air smelled of smoke and stone, blankets and sweet tobacco. I'd linger happily, dangling my feet off the rough oak bench, the dining-room table. We talked and didn't need to, and eat, and she'd busy herself in the living room or the kitchen, coring a piece of fruit or

ing the crumbs off the counter, an open palm with quick, movements I found strangely ringing. Nearly sixty at the time, she had about her an old-world stolid unthinking diplomacy and tact. We both knew, of course,

Mark Slouka's most recent story for *Harpers's Magazine*, "The Shape of Water," appeared in the September 1996 issue.



the honeyed tea or the *jahodový* brought me dashing down the very Saturday morning, and just the time I'd begin to fidget and at the living-room window, she'd nodding by the back door, calling *holde, mladý Mostovský je tady*—"Mostovsky is here—and soon that I'd spot him (momentarily in the frame of the kitchen window like some forest spirit escaping a portrait), walking through the high bracken. Spare and tall, inebriably patrician in his grass-stained and small, frameless glasses (dense weeds caught in the straps of sandals and the dirt caked on his feet), he'd first wash his arms to the sink in the basin by the door, then lightly brush the dry dirt off his soles with a few strokes of a stiff-combed brush that hung from a nail above the door. Only when these things were done would he look in.

"*Čas vám,*" he'd say, never smiling at the absurd formality of the greeting. "I see you've fortified yourself for the rigors of the day. Truly a fine old block, eh?" he'd add to me. "His father, too, is always present." Mrs. Černý, answering from the kitchen, would mumble something inaudible, to which he'd chuckle, then wave his arm like a coachman in a fairy tale. "*Půjdem?*" he'd ask me.

Teasing, mild enough and diluted further by a very real affectionate little to me then. If it ever made me uncomfortable, if I ever felt a touch of condescension beneath the banter, I assume I accepted somehow justified, given my own sins, failings and failures, or ignited by virtue of the mercenary vision of childhood. Rheinhold, you see, built or brought or showed me things, week in and week out for this, more than anything I loved him.

Like my own father was off in the room shed that had once served as a radio station, typing on the typewriter with the broken *e* and *o*. Černý was pointing to the crest of a woodpecker as long as I'd been in the room, pounding fist-size holes in the oak, or showing me, through the window he'd cut in the shoreline

thickets, a pickerel and its shadow in the sunlit flat by the swamp. A luna moth, ghostly and pale, that he'd trapped against the screen at night, an old coffee tin with a half-dozen turtle eggs wrapped in moss, a barred feather, perfect and huge, that he'd found in the garden—each week it was something new.

The pain of returning to the city every Sunday night from September to June would be lessened, time and again, by the wonders in the trunk of the car or on the seat next to me, wonders a quiet six-year-old well down the first-grade pecking order could ride, like a pet panther, into the hearts of all the Sherrys and Susies and Samanthas for the short space of each week's show-and-tell, eclipsing utterly the urban Lotharios reduced to peddling their fathers' collections of watermarked three-cent stamps. Sometimes, indeed, my contributions required an advance call or two—as much for courtesy as clearance—to prepare teachers for, say, a small colony of paper wasps buzzing inside a gallon jar, or a milk snake in a box with a sliding glass lid, or an outraged baby heron—given to both fish puree delivered through a paper straw and rhythmic and unremitting shrieking—standing one-legged at the bottom of a parrot cage.

Distracted as they may have been by their own lives, my parents were nonetheless quick to recognize the power and status these things conferred, and rarely stood in my way. Whatever their feelings for Černý (and I was alert enough to pick up, even at that age, their growing resentment of the man—of his brusqueness, his patrician airs, his position in the émigré community...), they couldn't help but appreciate (at least partly because they may have suspected, in their weaker moments, that Černý's condescension was not entirely unjustified) his kindness to me. In a world without grandfathers, Černý had, with a certain amount of rough grace, stepped into the role, and if relations with the middle generation were a bit strained, well, that was not unusual even among real families. Our apartment on the fifteenth floor above 63rd Road in Queens soon took on a strangely animate cast—feathered, furred, and antlered—and my father, burying whatever jealousy he may have

felt for my benefit, simply stepped, like a rejected suitor, back into the shadows. My mother, though temperamentally more cautious, less quick to concede, eventually followed suit.

They would have done well to pay attention. I can say this now, of course, because time, like an inverted telescope, shows clearly what was once too close, what proximity (and love) kept hidden. Eye to the lens, fully thirty-five years and more since those summer afternoons I spent in his company, I see again the square-fingered strength of his hands, the veins in his pale wrists where they emerged from his shirt always rolled one button up, the way he would peel his rimless glasses from his face to wipe the sweat or grime with a clean handkerchief. I remember the comfort of his silence, his old-man's smell of tobacco and cologne, the nod of approval I'd receive for understanding something he'd shown me, or applying it well. The burst of tart on my lips, the smell of orange mushrooms (laid out to dry in the sun like battalions of finger-size soldiers), the stench of the mud where the goldenbloom grew... all these I remember. All these I see.

But the landscape now reaches easily from sun to dark, skirting depths I never knew: Černý's descriptions—always precise, analytical—of nature's horrors; his chuckle on finding the oddly human head of the mantis he had kept for months in a tabletop cage (the cat had apparently moved the lid), staring up from the living-room carpet like some ghostly green mint. Or the particular look in his eyes—detachment, perhaps—that morning we watched a mud-dauber wasp, iridescent and thin, battling for its life in a spider web under the eave of the outhouse. Wrenching, thrashing, buzzing furiously, it tried to bring its abdomen around but found itself bound in coil after coil of gossamer silk. Something about the drawn-out desperation of the thing moved me, I recall, and I thought of bringing a stick down through the web to set it free, but one glance at Černý put the thought from my mind. We watched the wasp disappear, bit by bit, leg by leg, until all that was left was the buzzing, and then even this grew muffled, and the spider, straddling his trussed and broken feast, delivered the fatal sting to



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thetic cocoon dangling in the  
v of the eave.  
aware, of course, that none of  
ubled me then, that I felt noth-  
love for this man—for his gruff-  
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those who say that the past, like  
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whatever enters it, and that the  
or lie of the broken oar is some-  
ve can never know.

I reminded of all these things  
tall, perfect skull, hardly larger  
ny fist, which sits on a pile of  
on my desk. Rheinhold Černý  
to me two days before my sev-  
irthday, and I can remember  
ith absolute clarity, the thrill  
ecitation rising in my chest as  
me by the hand to the compost  
nd then—carefully, almost ten-  
-began digging in the dirt with  
l stick. I remember the bones  
g up out of the soil, seeing for  
t time the sockets of the max-  
e rounded ball joint at the base,  
rfect and beautiful ferocity of  
ines. I remember the way he  
d it clean with an old tooth-  
ie took from his pocket, the way  
ll fit the jaw like a lid on a well-  
box—hinged and tight—and I  
ber him holding it up to me, in  
his face, and opening and clos-  
jaws in time with his own.

I look at it now (still held to-  
by the wires he twisted himself  
ne afternoon almost forty years  
nd I say to those who claim the  
orever unknown to us, fuck you  
nen, fuck you all, for I have run  
nd the length of the broken oar,  
now what is bent, and I know  
s whole. Rheinhold Černý, al-  
miling behind his rimless  
his hands, hinged at the wrist,  
ically opening and closing the  
that long-lost raccoon for the  
of a little boy stunned with  
de, is someone I loved like a  
This much is true. And this  
rue: in his own particular way,  
he was a monster beyond  
reckoning.

gan, I suppose, the night my fa-  
rned the old Desoto off the

blacktop onto the rutted dirt road that  
ran around the lake. Already sleep-  
ing, my face pressed into the crease  
of the seat, I woke to the sound of the  
grass between the wheel ruts swish-  
ing against the steel beneath me, and  
mentally began ticking off each fa-  
miliar turn and lurch. Thinking I still  
slept, my parents were quiet. Every  
now and then I could hear them whis-  
per to each other in the dark, a word  
or two, no more.

"What's that in the road?" said my  
mother suddenly.

"I don't know," said my father.

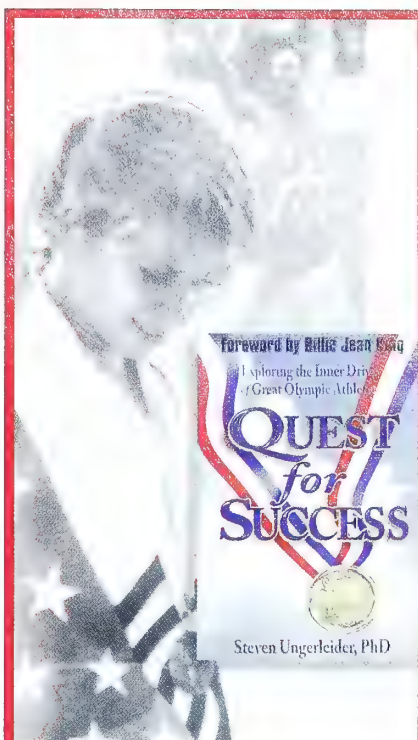
By the time he'd eased the car to a  
stop in the darkness and turned off the  
motor, I was up and staring bleary-  
eyed at what appeared to be a dog-size  
stone or lump of mud set down at the  
end of the headlights' beam. Taking  
the flashlight from the glove com-  
partment, my father turned off the  
headlights. It was as though the car  
around us had suddenly disappeared.  
Night was everywhere. Insects sawed  
back and forth in the trees, wild, ar-  
rhythmic, an army of elfin woodsmen.  
"Let's have a look," he said.

It wasn't until we were ten feet away  
that we realized the thing was a turtle,  
its huge, rocklike shell brown with  
age. It seemed emerged from some  
other world, accidentally caught in  
the land of families and electricity and  
cars. Leeches big as my father's thumb  
clung to its scales; its skin, loose and  
leathery, bulged around its head and  
legs. It struck at us as we came near,  
once, twice, hissing with each awk-  
ward lunge, then settled back, its gap-  
ing mouth pale in the flashlight's  
beam. The smell of mud rot and car-  
rion rose in the air.

My father, squatting with the flash-  
light in one hand and a crooked stick  
he'd picked up off the road in the oth-  
er, shook his head in wonder. "Ty seš  
mně obluda"—you are a monster—he  
said quietly to the turtle hunkered  
down in the dirt. Then, practicing his  
newly acquired English: "How are you?  
What's up?" The turtle hissed softly.  
"Fine, thanks," said my father. "Not  
much. And you?" He chuckled.

"Je pozdě, Pavle"—it's late, Paul—  
said my mother. "Stop tormenting the  
poor turtle with your English."

"Nothing like this back home, Hel-  
en," my father said, and, squat-step-



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ping forward a few feet, he waved the stick in front of the snapper's jaws. "*Na toto jsme emigrovali.*" For this we emigrated. His words were punctuated by a hissing lunge and the clack of jaws. A foot-long piece of my father's stick lay in the dirt.

Rather than move the thing, we drove around it, I recall, the car bumping and scraping up and over the shoulder to the soft ground of the meadow, then back onto the dirt. Looking back through the rear window, I saw it sprout its Pleistocene head and clawed legs and begin plodding, heavily, through the redness of the taillights toward the still waters of the lake.

From that day forth, the snapper filled my child's need for unseen things to fear; reeking, primitive, it moved, always, somewhere below the surface, lending that border a magic, a resonance, it might never have had without it. Every swirl, every half-glimpsed shadow, every sensed or half-sensed thing moving in the deep green rooms cut by the shadows of trunk and branch, hinted at its presence; hinted, that is, until, on some still afternoon, gentle as a Corot painting, an angler in a rowboat, lulled into disbelief, would start at the sudden apparition risen by his side: ungainly, anachronistic, a griffin on a table.

I see him standing at the end of his dock at dusk, a large salad bowl of crusted bread cradled in the crook of his arm. With his free hand he tosses handfuls of bread, like flakes of light, to a family of swans. They duck and glide around him, wriggling their feathered tails. One rises, flapping, its wings momentarily pinned against the dark water. Getting down on one knee, like a suitor proposing to his spell-locked love, Černý reaches out. Although I can see little else, I see this tableau, as though frozen in time: his body, balanced and sure, the paleness of his extended arm, her neck dipping gently down.

I remember the swans above all, but Černý's love was hardly that selective. A practical, rational man for all the years I knew him, he nonetheless had one weakness. No fewer than half a dozen bird feeders, some with suet, some with seeds, surrounded his cot-

tage; houses for wrens and gro and woodpeckers, lovingly built and situated, peeked from under eave branches or nestled in the crooks of oaks. A pair of ancient Zeiss binoculars, bulky and strong, were never far from his reach, and his ear, like a tight musician's, could pick out the faintest change in the twittering, the ensemble performing round the house. It sometimes seemed, for his benefit and his alone.

Calls, nesting habits, migratory patterns and flight characteristics, identifying marks both at rest and in wing (and all the possible variations thereof), all these he had learned. The irregular verbs of some dying language, until he was able not just to speak it but to understand it, interested him. On certain spring mornings, when he was a member, I would find him standing with his eyes closed in some far corner of the garden, the expression of a hypnotized features—the slightest involuntary movements of his lips, eyes beneath their lids—suggested beatitude bordering on rapture. Being slightly awkward, I'd wait for the spell to pass. He always had been there. "*Poslouchej, Mostovský*," he said quietly, his right hand raised to the hand of Adam to some ascription. "*Poslouchej.*" Listen. "*To je krásná. That is beauty.*"

I wasn't there when it happened. I didn't see the swan, pushing through the shallows to Černý's suddenly jar, then plunge like a cork beneath the surface. I didn't see the one wing cutting the boiling water or the upward gush of bloody water rising out of the dark.

But I'd seen it before and accounted it somehow. During the course of one summer, fully half the ducklings died, abruptly wrenched into oblivion. And every May, the survivors would be back, paddling the shallows in the reeds. Life seethed again and rose again. More profoundly profligate, nature threw its endless retaliations into the consuming fire and drew them forth again. Everything was the same: the frog, I knew, was modically kicking its way down the snake's expanding throat, the strings of milky pearls in the shadow of the brook; the cottontail, still sitting in the taloned air, had fat

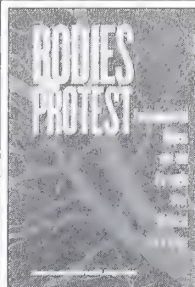


... "Only waste is wrong," my father had told me once, and of all sons that faltered or failed, that stayed true.

Rheinhold Černý, standing in a rowboat, helplessly plunging a wooden oar into the watery darkness. Bits of down now seemed to burn and swim like hot ash over an ashtray, reckoned his world by some starker calculus: creation, like a clock's ticking watch, had revealed its end and had to be made right. Calmly, he presented his case: the turtles, he said, served no discernible purpose. Regularly killed the waterfowl for their beauty and grace were cherished by every local resident, young and old. He himself had seen them grow from a full-grown swan. Clearly, it was time to reduce their numbers, and he was shaping a hand to a situation out of control. He himself would not work, take care of all the details. All he asked of his neighbors was to leave him to do what, regretfully, had to be done.

His father alone tried to protest the questions, though even then, as always by the older man's reasoned maturity, his air of faded wisdom, his perfectly calibrated condescension, soon found him helpless. Sitting with my father on the Černýs' stone porch one summer evening, yellow city lamps flickering and a Mozart playing softly from inside the cottage, my father, hunching forward in his wicker chair, tried to raise the subject. Why not wait to see if the demonstrations continued? he asked. Why not call some expert for advice? Or not simply pick up a few of the turtles and transport them to the lake?

Coming back, one trousered leg slipped easily over the other, Černý took a pouch of tobacco off the table, lit the sumptuous, black foil, and stuffed his pipe. A single flick of the match and a match flared. Holding the bowl, he took two meditative puffs, each accompanied by a slight puffing sound of the lips. "Milý pane Mostovský"—my dear Mr. Mostovský—he said finally, his voice wearily deconstructing the syllables like a parent trying to get itself to speak to a particularly unruly child: "The degradations have



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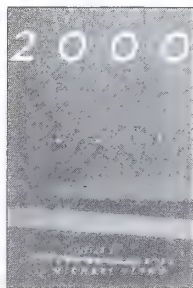
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continued long enough. Experts can only confirm what we already know. And as for wandering about the countryside, hoping to stumble across a wayward turtle now and again, well, that is a solution that strikes me as singularly ineffectual. No, my dear sir—and here I could see my mother gently place her hand on my father's arm—"what must be done must be done, and, as the Americans are fond of saying, a job worth doing is worth doing well."

"That would depend on the job," said my father quietly, his jaw set.

"*Jak rozumíte*—suit yourself—said Černý, and then, to his wife: "What about that cake you've been promising us, my dear."

Ever competent, ever thorough, like a carpenter in his workshop, he gathered his tools: thirty plastic gallon jugs, carefully rinsed of milk or vinegar or carburetor fluid; forty yards of double-gauge wire, rolled off the wooden spool at Washburn's store; fifty stainless-steel hooks, size 6/0, from the small, salt-water fishing section of Mazolla's Bait and Tackle.

Mazolla's son, Paul, bagged the hooks for him. "Bluefish?" he asked, substituting, by the usual hunter's shorthand, the object of the quest for subject and verb and everything else.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You goin' for bluefish?" He pointed. "The hooks."

"Ah, yes. No." Then, after a pause: "Turtles, I'm afraid."

"Turtles?" asked Mazolla, uncomprehending. "What for?"

Černý accepted the bag and change. "Because, young man, they're a nuisance." The little brass bell over the door had already jangled his exit when Mazolla spoke again.

"That's a lot of turtles," he said, nodding toward the small paper sack.

Černý paused in the open door.

"All of them," he said quietly.

**B**ut then nothing happened. Those few who had given the matter any thought in the first place simply forgot about it, assuming, with some small relief, that Černý had quietly taken care of things in his own way or abandoned the plan altogether. Labor Day came and went, bringing with it

the return exodus to the city. By late September, the majority of cottages hidden behind the trees stood locked and silent.

My family was usually among the few who insisted on pushing the season, yet that year, hindered by my father's obligations in town, we came rarely. I remember long, hazy days spent playing on the city playgrounds or in vacant lots, the huge blocky shadows of the buildings advancing a strange silence across the heated asphalt, dulling, as though underwater, the far drone of the freeway. I argued and cried, of course, for a last weekend, a last escape, before the long rain of November set in, but there was no help for it.

You can imagine my joy, then, and my parents' relief, when the Goldsteins, our neighbors at the lake, offered to pick me up early one Friday morning in mid-October, take me with them, and have me home in time for dinner. They were going, they said, to clean and lock up for the winter. I was welcome to come along. At six o'clock the next morning, I was waiting with my father in the first light along 63rd Road, holding only a lunch bag, a two-piece rod, and a tackle box into which my mother had slipped a change of socks.

The first thing I remember from that day is smoke rising straight as an exclamation point above the trees from the Černýs' cabin. The second is seeing something white burst above the water under the overhanging trees, disappear, then rise again a few yards down.

I had rowed quite close before I realized the thing was a plastic jug, wired like a huge cork to something under the surface. I tried to catch it with an oar, but each time I approached, the jug—as though alive, and not merely an indicator of something living below—would plow a panicked furrow under the surface, reappearing a few yards away. I chased it along the shoreline for a while, and then—I don't know why—instead of rowing on to the Černýs' dock, slid the rowboat into the reeds and set off on foot.

There were no omens, no premonitions. The garden was empty, the house strangely silent. Smoke like a quickly blurring ghost still issued from

the stone chimney. I didn't call hallo the cottage or the shed but instead walked around the house into the woods as though following a string, straight to the top of a wooded rise.

Below me, inside a chicken enclosure nailed to a circle of and carefully staked to the ground was Rheinhold Černý, in hip and work gloves, moving about the stone garden. A wheelbarrow lay on its side, its third wheel slowly spinning. To the left, by the fence, lay a pair of white plastic jugs, each connected by what appeared to be a fist-size rope. I was about to call when a movement at the far end of the enclosure drew my attention. A stone was climbing the wire fence.

The mind runs slower than the eyes—it took me a moment to realize what I saw. When I did, I vomited into the ferns.

Distracted by his work, Rheinhold Černý never noticed the little boy crouching like an animal in the ferns. To this day, if he lives, he is unsuspecting that someone saw him do that October day, that someone watched, like Dante over the abyss, as he walked among the trees and the damned still dragging the end of a yard-long wire the length of which he'd drawn them from the house. How he pulled them to the wire circle, one by one, their thick legs scraping resistant furrows in the dirt; how he placed a foot on the wire, how he lessened the shells, drew out their legs, how he necks by the wire still clamped in their throats, then shook their heads with two or three blows of a well-honed hatchet.

Even now I see them crawling, reptilian hearts too stubborn or too die, past their own sudden heart twisting and snapping like a root wrenched from trouble, past the growing pile of jugs, past the fence, past their own brother might hiss, if able, or continue mute like themselves, to the wire which last barrier they would begin to climb—unbelievably, absurdly—as though the men's freedom had somehow outlived their comprehension of it and their need for it, as though stopping lives on the other side of a closed



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## Terror in Israel

### How should it affect the "peace process"?

Two Arab suicide bombers exploded their deadly devices in a busy market in Jerusalem. Fourteen innocent civilians were killed and hundreds of people were injured. What does it mean and how should it affect the so-called "peace process"?

### What are the facts?

**A history of terror.** The recent outrage in Jerusalem was preceded by a similar attack in a crowded Tel Aviv restaurant, in which, by sheer good luck, "only" three people were killed.

Since the signing of the Oslo Accord, 259 Israeli Jews have been killed and close to 1,000 wounded. To put it in perspective, these 259 killed are equivalent to about 13,000 people being killed in the United States in such criminal attacks.

These are the same people who, since the "handshake", committed murderous terrorist attacks all over the world. There can be no question that they were

also behind the Pan Am flight 103 plane explosion which killed 270 people, mostly Americans; that they were responsible for the blowing up of the Air Force barracks in Saudi Arabia, in which 19 Air Force

personnel died; and in literally hundreds of other acts of terror. All of these terror acts are specifically authorized by Yassir Arafat, who, though now a "statesman," was classified as an international terrorist by the U.S. Department of State.

**Any pretext suffices.** The basic understanding with Arafat and his Palestinian Arabs was that terror and mayhem would stop. But that has not happened. On the contrary: More Jews have been killed by terror attacks since the "handshake" than in any comparable

**"Only Israel should determine whether its national rights and its security requirements are being honored and fulfilled. Only then, and not before, should it be prepared to continue its negotiations with the Palestinian Arabs."**

period before it. Arafat and the "Palestinian Authority" actively encourage their followers to use violence to accomplish their ends. The PLO has not even complied with the promise to amend their infamous Charter, which explicitly calls for the destruction of the State of Israel. In blood-curdling speeches, Arafat and his henchman goad their followers into violence, urging them to "liberate Palestine and Jerusalem" by jihad (holy war), "with blood and with fire".

Any pretext to violence suffices. Not too long ago, it was the opening of an entrance to an archaeological tunnel that offended the sensitivities of the Palestinian Arabs.

Next it was the Israeli Jews constructing residences in the eastern part of Jerusalem on land they own. The murderous attack on the Jerusalem market, of course, had no pretext at all. It was just done out of sheer hatred for the Jews and the desire to kill as many of them as possible.

And that is the nub of the problem. Only the most naive can believe that the Palestinian Arabs (or the rest of the Arab/Muslim world) can be placated by the Israelis bringing "sacrifices for peace". Even if the Israeli Jews were prepared to hand over the entire land of Israel and only retain the enclave of Tel Aviv, it would not suffice. The elimination of any Jewish vestige is the inalterable goal.

No peace can come about until that attitude and that mindset change. And that might take a long time.

What does this mean for the so-called "peace process"? So far, the Israelis have complied with all obligations. They have turned over Gaza and all major population centers in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") to the Palestinian Authority (P.A.). Further transfers are planned. But all of this should stop immediately and for at least six months. Then, the minimum conditions that Israel should impose on Arafat for any continuation should be: (1) The rescission of the PLO Charter advocating the destruction of Israel; (2) A full-bore effort on the part of the PLO to totally stop all terror attacks and to apprehend and turn over to Israeli justice all terrorists now operating under the protection of the P.A. And, nobody — not the United States, any other countries, or the United Nations—should be the arbiters of this. Only Israel should determine whether its national rights and its security requirements are being honored and fulfilled. Only then, and not before, should it be prepared to continue its negotiations with the Palestinian Arabs.

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# DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 177

**T**his diagram, called *Double Acrostic*, will contain a poem of *unpublished work*. The numbered squares in the diagram correspond to the numbered blanks under the WORDS. The WORDS form an acrostic: the first letter of each spells the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken. The letter in the upper right-hand corner of each square indicates the WORD containing the letter to be entered in that square. Contest rules and the solution to last month's puzzle appear on page 76.

## CLUES

A. The Captains' daughter in *H.M.S. Pinafore*

108 46 138 139 41 66  
32 82 145

B. "the bliss of dying" (3 wds., Pope: "The Dying Christian to His Soul")

94 144 100 140 157 124  
132 182 122

C. Proceeded toward, is ringer (3 wds.)

118 32 48 133 139 147  
15

D. Last possible moment (3 wds.)

112 170 62 181 35 102 161 106  
13 22

E. Fatty, greasy

160 29 156 37 113 20 70 153  
60

F. Eng. poet (1829-92, "Enoch Arden")

79 12 108 137 69 169 81  
91

G. Try to subvert by stealth

98 36 184 165 66 77 74 19  
111

H. Very high, elevated

10 4 16 28 149  
21

I. Transmitting on airwaves

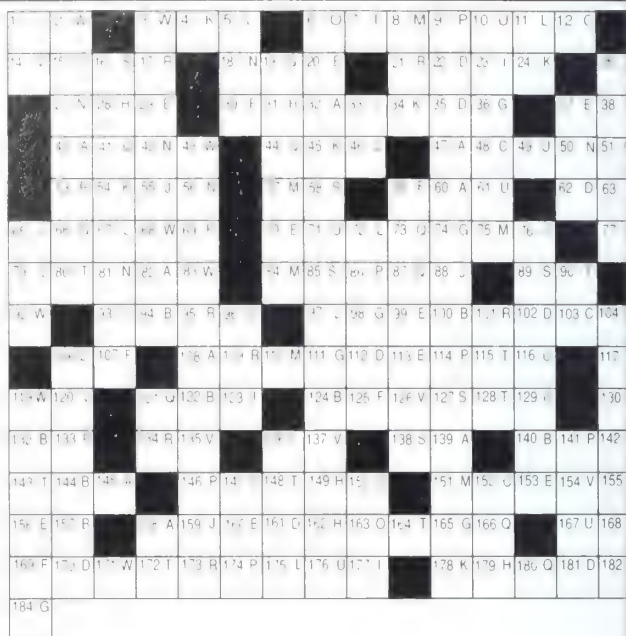
13 14 130 33 177  
24

J. "The name of the man Franklin took the hint" (Frost, "The Road Not Taken")

65 131 159 76 105 123 55 46  
88

K. "The name of the man Franklin took the hint" (Frost, "The Road Not Taken")

175 11 97 67 72 5  
110 75 151 39 57 84 8



N. Psychos, dingbats, wordos

41 27 18 64 81 56 50

O. "Let a race — now rise and take control" (2 wds.; Margaret Walker, "For My People")

51 163 6 96 41

P. Very closely contested (3 wds.)

183 114 140 141 153 155 117 80  
174 9

Q. Am. writer (1876-1916, *Martin Eden*)

57 121 182 160 44 73

R. Am. novelist-playwright (1913-84, *Bios the Dead*, full name)

109 95 53 101 173 17 134 78  
21

S. Rebut (2 wds.)

89 150 16 127 138 85 58 20

T. Marshall Islands atoll noted for atomic tests

172 115 164 148 90 143 128 8

U. Fretting, complaining

49 61 71 10 176 167 129 11

V. Bumble

120 126 14 137 154 135

W. Trumpet-shaped drinking glass about 3 ft. long (hyph.)

43 119 68 83 92 2 3 17  
10



TERS

ued from page 6

kely to hide their dirty laundry  
h a conspiracy of silence.

l Reed  
nd, Calif.

y is Maya Angelou "a very weak  
Does she too often go for the  
yme? Are her themes lame? Is  
tax weak? She can't be a weak  
s Vince Passaro suggests, simply  
e she serves a weak president.  
e to discount Alice Walker's  
novel *The Color Purple* on the  
of the passage Passaro quotes,  
he doesn't like because it's  
happiness does get talked about  
ks. Walker may be "overrepre-  
" in the new Norton Anthology,  
at she is "overrespected" is up  
ate. In debates, however, one  
rovide arguments.

fford Jr.  
Hollywood, Calif.

## watching

id Duncan's article "Bird-  
ng as a Blood Sport" [July] is  
powerful and well-intentioned,  
ingly, it is about how he is be-  
tched, special him, about his  
demption and not that of the  
ose life he saves. Duncan un-  
tionally illustrates the basic  
a with *Harper's Magazine*: the  
are well written and the feel-  
e intense, but they are all the  
As Kate Daly suggests in her  
[July], *Harper's* is a bastion of  
lf-regard filled with irony, wit,  
ecissism. Nothing impinges on  
comfortable male cocoon. No  
ts are taken. No real questions  
red. The topic is always about  
ter's feelings, which he tries  
en succeeds in articulating as  
illy as possible, but the feel-  
ither change nor grow. *Harp-*  
vters encounter no surprises;  
e not jostled, humiliated, or  
ored. They set out only to dis-  
r themselves in the end.  
ad Means's short story in the  
ue ["Railroad Incident, Au-  
95"] provides another exam-

ple. It's about a guy once well shod  
but now tragically, beautifully dying.  
Thugs come out of nowhere and  
demonstrate with their fists how sad  
it is to be a man.

Reach out, editors. Find, read, and  
then publish women and the other  
people whose writing you find dull or  
uninteresting simply because its final  
concern is not white-male torment.  
Or, short of that drastic step, think  
about the reason that you don't.

Harah Frost  
Royal Oak, Mich.

My parents taught me at an early  
age to keep my hands out of nests  
and not to touch baby birds, howev-  
er appealing. The human smell, they  
said, would put off the parent birds;  
interference with wild things meant  
death to them.

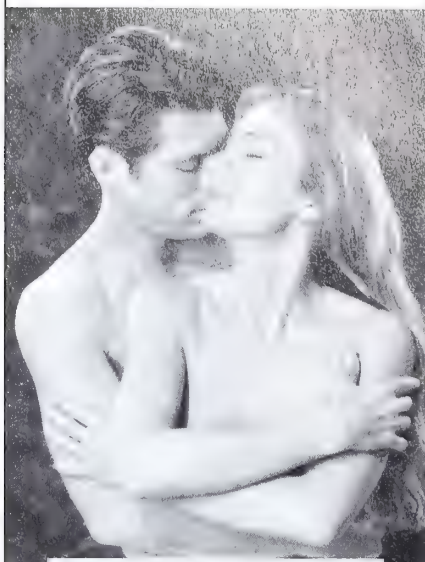
Duncan's description of his heart-  
felt love for wild creatures is, in fact,  
a litany of one dead animal after an-  
other. I was amused to see that he  
characterizes himself as "a hell-bent  
driver." Where I live, such drivers  
leave behind them strings of dead  
possums, squirrels, and other animals.  
As for the story of rescuing a pygmy  
owl in the midst of oncoming traffic,  
I pray that I am nowhere nearby  
when Duncan next attempts to as-  
sauge his conscience by diving onto,  
through, and over a highway. To  
have risked his own life and the lives  
of others in an attempt to outrun his  
guilt is so silly that I wonder how he  
could even admit to having done it.

Louise Grafton  
Princeton, N.J.

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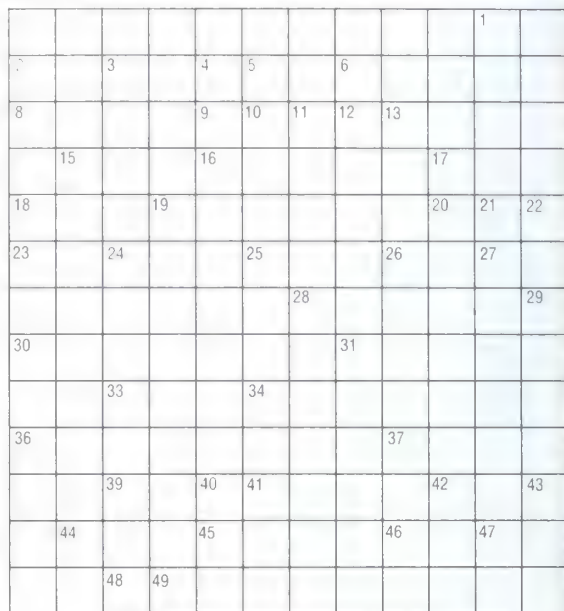


## RighTangles—V

By Richard E. Maltby Jr.

(with acknowledgments to E. R. Galli)

**I**n this puzzle, an adaptation of a classic invented by E. R. Galli, each answer is to be entered beginning in the appropriate numbered square and heading in the direction given—North, South, East, or West—until it takes a single right- or left-hand turn. The turn may occur at any point in the answer. When the diagram is completed, each square will be tenanted by a letter in precisely two words—and two appropriate unclued entries cutting across the center lines of the diagram will be revealed. Clue answers include four proper names. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 76.



### CLUES

- 1S. Put away what wreaths wreathes (3)
- 2E. Woods getting eliminated—in golf it's called smart (9)
- 3W. Bird nests in castles around lake (9)
- 4S. Copes with exchanging present—it gets you where you live! (9)
- 5W. In principle, I can go either way! (5)
- 6E. Cow with new head would be sheep (3)
- 7N. Fashionable dresser left right around sure TV hit (7)
- 8E. Stuffy reactionaries purging army combatants (4)
- 9E. Burglar caught in act (3)
- 10S. Going up a stair-case, canned, tanked (10)
- 11N. Clone malfunctioned—replace it (9)
- 12E. Disguised in case dead rise (8)
- 13N. Without energy, blow work! (5)
- 14W. Parcel out what precedes a shower? (6)
- 15W. Woman in a musical take-off (4)
- 16S. Bake with top off oven (4)
- 17E. He's in back—try again later (6)
- 18N. Wrong-headed, very big cheese material (7)
- 19N. Cut out troublesome clients (7)
- 20W. Airman with portable lettercase? (10)
- 21N. *Mam Event's* penultimate character—in John Ireland's version (4)
- 22E. Drink in the audience—it's uplifting in a game (3)
- 23S. Send up a renter (relocating) (9)
- 24E. A tree—it could make do again (7)
- 25S. Watches *The Good Earth*—but it's hard to look at (7)
- 26S. Onstage, little devil with this is affecting (6)

- 27S. Becomes firm about innocent blowouts on shore (9)
- 28S. First letter from Fifties teen queen! (3)
- 29S. Sound that says "Excuse me" with an edge (4)
- 30E. Red birds answer to some invitations (7)
- 31N. Slide all over edge (5)
- 31S. Sole supporter of ball game's slider (7)
- 32W. Having no order for returning to a padding in fashion (7)
- 33S. Article in *Pet Health* (3)
- 34S. Esso, others, are downsized with ease (6)
- 35N. Something written for shadow puppets? (10)
- 36N. Gone, like shells and bow ties, perhaps (6)
- 37S. 1,004,150 of the general public (5)
- 38W. I'm part of theatre because I once took a bow (5)
- 38S. Auditor's lines mounted up (4)
- 39W. Moved here but nearly deserted animal! (4)
- 40W. Traduce abandoned Illinois city (7)
- 41E. 15W, curiously, is something that can be finished (4)
- 42N. Mis-construe primary events! (8)
- 43N. Gosh and golly, it's how a rock group ends up! (4)
- 44E. English, after rowdy games, do a lot of drugs (8)
- 45W. Times for a partial gesture (4)
- 46N. Shrew goes upstream in Chattanooga River (6)
- 47S. Top to bottom, sketch parts to be put together (4)
- 48E. Small jet starts to spin quietly upward, in real trouble (6)
- 49E. Traitor in France who connected with arms supporter (8)
- 50W. Bite the end off 2E (5)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed program with name and address to "RighTangles," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by October 8. Send no money. Entries will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Random drawing will select winners. Winners will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the magazine. Past winners of the August puzzle, "Head-Hunting III," are Madeline Cook, Milledgeville, Georgia, Douglas J. Hoylman, Delavan, Wisconsin.



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*Fiction by Nadine Gordimer*

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## Sexual Healing

In his essay on Americans' confused attitudes toward sex, "In the Garden of Tabloid Delight" [August], Lewis Lapham asks, with subtle rhetorical fatalism, "Where else can we live except in the garden of tabloid delight?" He implies that "a system of moral value that corresponds to the workings of big-time, postindustrial capitalism" is required before we can live elsewhere. He laments America's moral decline as a fairly recent media-driven phenomenon over which individuals have little or no control.

I'm sure that this view reassures and serves to exonerate readers who have felt a pang of remorse for their daily obsession with meaningless or sensational trivialities. Lapham portrays us as a nation of mere victims drawn uncontrollably to the unceasing hyperbole of competing media sources and consumer products. Are we really that helpless? I don't think so. The problem is not that people are unable to distinguish right from wrong. If they bother to think about it, most people know when they're trivializing their own existence, or when they're about to do so. But this knowledge alone is insufficient to assure responsible behavior.

Such a state of affairs is nothing new. Well over a hundred years ago, Henry David Thoreau addressed this issue more completely in his essay "Life Without Principle." Thoreau cautioned us that "the mind can be

permanently profaned by the act of attending to trivial things, so that all our thoughts shall be tinged with triviality." Unfortunately, too many people lack the personal integrity and self-discipline to make more responsible choices. As for the tabloid stories about Eddie Murphy, Marv Albert, and Frank Gifford that opened Lapham's essay, I'm prepared to say that I knew nothing about them before this reading. My essay was too short, and there are more manageable things to explore.

Glenn R. Roesler  
Speedway, Ind.

I'm willing to concede that Lapham is right: things are getting little out of hand. In the not too distant past it took a certain amount of honest work to get invited to a party. These days we are inundated with such invitations, and, worse, they are generally insincere. But it seems to me that Lapham has been carried away by his distaste for the tawdriness that surrounds the American mass culture. Yes, American mass culture is shallow and narcissistic, but the transformation in public attitudes toward sexual morals has been driven not only by the false religion of the self but also by a vision of social and political freedom. It may be the marketing of sexual freedom has been over the selfishness of that vision and ignored the politics of sexual liberation. But that doesn't mean the politics have disappeared.

The difficulty is that the sexual agenda of the feminist, gay, and other countercultural movements, which was meant as a radical utopian counterstrike against

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society, has been blithely con-  
 ed by that society and used to  
 its own complacency. Yet mass  
 are gets mistaken for American  
 are only when one insists, as  
 am does, on a single, overarch-  
 'unified field of moral law." If  
 am is serious about looking for a  
 moral order instead of simply  
 posing the old one, he will find  
 it is being generated well out of  
 e of the voyeuristic eye of the  
 media and the advertising in-  
 y.

decade or three ago, the tabloid  
 s Lapham discusses would never  
 seen the light of day. It is con-  
 tent to link President Clinton's  
 ed sexual voraciousness to his  
 ism, but the cause of the latter  
 t must lie elsewhere, for there  
 umerous examples of his princi-  
 predecessors philandering as  
 The real question is this: What  
 ens when the ubiquitous light of  
 amera illuminates all our dark-  
 ers and exposes the hypocrisies  
 make life livable? Can we live  
 out those lies? Any new and uni-  
 American moral order will have  
 swer that question.

Wood  
 ce, Calif.

wis Lapham's essay captures a  
 ing aspect of American life that  
 een with us for over two cen-  
 s: the ever-greater social and  
 disintegration wrought by cap-  
 am's increasingly impersonal  
 etplace.

pham writes as though people  
 care about morality anymore;  
 ore likely that we don't know  
 to act morally. Doing the right  
 is no longer as easy as keeping  
 pants zipped or boycotting evil  
 s. For better or for worse, the  
 y moral alternatives of the past  
 ration have graduated into a  
 sophisticated worldview. In  
 ore complex moral landscape,  
 sk not whether we should  
 e this or that position but how  
 ily behavior will affect a range  
 ople and resources intricately  
 ected in a global network of in-  
 pendencies.

at least we try. American his-

tory has long been characterized by  
 the struggle to define new moral  
 structures appropriate to a society  
 with few social moorings other than  
 the free market. Hence the moral  
 and social uncertainties that make us  
 so vulnerable to the comforting  
 identities that the market sells.

But while the triumph of global  
 commercialism may have upped the  
 ante, it surely hasn't made a Sodom  
 of America. I suspect that most  
 people would like to be moral and  
 would like to find meaning outside  
 the marketplace; the problem is that

they fumble in the process. Instead of  
 lamenting that no one will listen to  
 ideas about a new moral order, as  
 Lapham does, we should discuss how,  
 exactly, one goes about acting moral-  
 ly at the end of the millennium.

Nathaniel Frank  
 Providence, R.I.

I agree with Lewis Lapham that  
 President Clinton's behavior is an  
 example of our society's moral am-  
 bivalence about human sexuality.  
 The President's behavior, however,

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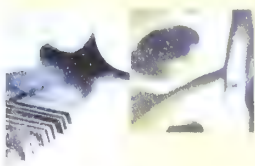
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is not unusual among political leaders, and the culture's moral confusion is not unprecedented. Throughout history, there has been a moral ambiguity about human sexuality and mating, particularly with regard to males. Many presidents and world leaders, like the public at large, have engaged in extramarital affairs. Only in this era has the media confirmed what previously was suspected or known but not reported. Only in this era has the press sought endlessly to reveal intimate and personal details of presidential indiscretions, indignities, and even underwear.

How do the erudite indulgences of Lapham's essay in the public square of *Harper's Magazine* differ from the turgid sensationalism in the pigsty of the tabloid press? The time-honored moral ambivalence toward human sexuality and mating, or the tension between prudishness and salaciousness, is less the issue than is the loss of decorum in modern journalism.

Jill McRae  
Austin, Tex.

Were Lewis Lapham and the other editors of *Harper's Magazine* born yesterday? Lapham writes that in 1947 "sex was something that happened in France." I grew up in Boston in the '30s and '40s, and I can assure *Harper's* readers that there was plenty of sex in those days. Even the kids knew about it. We often commented on the condoms we saw lying in the gutters of Beacon Hill and the Boston Common. On our way to the movies we would pass by the Old Howard burlesque theater, and we had a pretty good idea of what was going on in there. We used to tell lots of dirty jokes and recount our experiences with girls.

Later, when I went into the military in 1943, I was shown movies about VD (apparently a term no longer in use) and given ample access to condoms. Despite the condoms, however, there were plenty of unwanted pregnancies, unwed mothers, back-alley abortions, and other heartrending tragedies.

Frank R. Tangherlin  
San Diego

By framing Lewis Lapham's essay on the American tabloid exposed with a wholly unrelated cover photograph, *Harper's Magazine* thrown itself into the ring with those who capitalize on the oppression of women. The debate about the magazine's treatment of women is from new in your Letters section. A July letter, Kate Daly pointed out the dearth of women writers in the pages. Then in August, in an issue that actually has two major articles written by women, their contribution is overshadowed by a photograph featuring a woman's breasts.

The woman and her two companions in the picture look like they're having fun. One of them is trying to pull down her dress; the other is holding the woman's dress so that she cannot keep her dress down. Don't they look happy? Wine glasses in hand, they stare into the lens with a half-smile and a half-laugh, because, after all, so much fun. Unfortunately, the photograph is not about sex; it is about scandal, morality, and a garden of delight. The photograph is about sexual aggression, something to which Lapham never refers. And sexual aggression equal violence and power, not the world of passive sexual codes that Lapham describes.

I'm sure the August issue sold to everyone who wants to read about sex, scandal and the shocking secrets of their fellow countrymen. I just wish the magazine would choose a more honest way of attracting new readers.

Suzanne Ehlers  
Washington, D.C.

You've got it all wrong. If *Harper's Magazine* displayed a great big penis bolting across its cover it would sell more copies. Trust me. Naked women are passé. Naked male appendages, however, would be a entirely different story.

It is a shame that *Harper's* zeal to meet the competition, has cumbled to the temptation to display women on its cover. The only way I'll ever buy the magazine again is if I see a penis on the cover. I dare

Wendy M. Wilson  
Mequon, Wis.



recently received my first issue was rather surprised by the lurid photograph. The last thing I expected when I subscribed was that I would have to explain to my girlfriend that I read *Harper's* only for articles.

new Christensen  
erst, Mass.

## Man's Meat

For all ethical medical scientists, incredulous and profoundly disdained at the grossly fallacious diatribe about animal rights by Joy Williams ["The Inhumanity of the Animal People," August]. I shall not discuss the misanthropic and supercilious tone of Williams's tirade; I am more concerned about medical error. The piece is filled with sneered, duplicitous animal-rights allegations that have been tenaciously propagandized and repeatedly edited over the past twenty years. All of these fictions are non-factual to anyone who is remotely familiar with medical science.

The indispensability of animals to medical research has been thoroughly documented. Preliminary animal experimentation was requisite in my research, which led to the successful worldwide clinical application of coronary arterial prostheses, as well as the research leading to the first successful coronary-artery bypass, the successful application of a carotid assist device, the first successful artificial use of the heart-lung machine by John Gibbon in 1953, and virtually every other advance in the treatment of cardiovascular diseases. Williams flagrantly distorts medical history to fit the illusory views of animal-rights zealots. Incontestable medical facts are not open to interpretation. A commitment to the humane treatment of animals, which reputable scientists have, should prompt ardent falsifications.

el E. DeBakey, M.D.  
ington, D.C.

ce in a blue moon, amid all the people give animal-rights advocates along comes a Joy Williams. article just inspired us for the

next ten years. We animal people can assure others that a cruelty-free lifestyle is surprisingly easy. We have written off fur, circuses, rodeos, zoos, and aquariums, and have eliminated meat, leather, feathers, eggs, wool (the cruelties to sheep are horrifying), and dairy products from our lives.

None of us claims to be Gandhi, and the world will never be Eden. We just want animals to have their small share of the sun and the earth and to experience humanity's dominion over them as stewardship, not tyranny.

Carla Bennett  
People for the Ethical  
Treatment of Animals  
Norfolk, Va.

When a grizzly bear bites the face of a woman in the Pacific Northwest, do you think it feels any sense of shame? Do you think that great white sharks have traumatic nightmares after they bite surfers? Or perhaps there is a self-help group for chickens who have pecked another chicken to death, which is a real problem in that community. If we think that such feelings in animals would be absurd, why do we expect more from ourselves?

Speaking about animal rights is like spitting into the wind. Our own rights are abrogated on a daily basis in thousands of ways. It is difficult enough for us to uphold, defend, and protect these rights without concerning ourselves with the so-called rights of those who cannot communicate with us and whom we happen to find quite tasty.

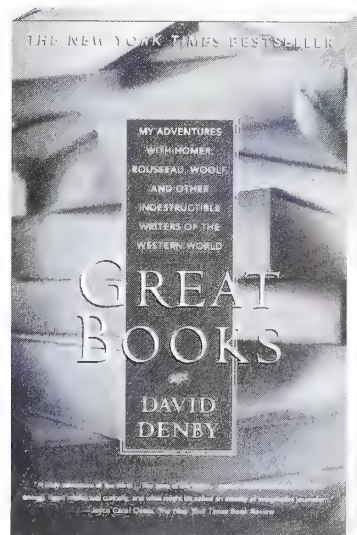
David T. Pudelwitts  
Las Vegas, Nev.

Joy Williams's article includes genuinely amazing descriptions of how some animals are regularly mistreated, but I was not moved to action. Although the world's supply of sympathy is infinite, the resources of time and energy are not. It is for this reason that truly compassionate individuals devote themselves to helping other people.

Perhaps the mostly affluent animal-welfare activists do not realize

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that millions of human beings have no access to the luxuries of regular meals, adequate clothing, permanent housing, or medical care. Until humans everywhere can live in comfort, health, and safety, the huge amounts of time and money devoted to the cause of animal rights strike me as decidedly inhumane.

Theodore Klupinski  
Columbus, Ohio

Joy Williams might have mentioned that we animal activists are very often human activists as well. Our involvement in the movement is a result of a broadening of our compassion for humans to include animals, not a replacement of it. The idea that compassion for animals and compassion for humans are mutually exclusive is a myth.

James E. Lewallen,  
President  
Florida Voices for Animals  
Tampa, Fla.

Just a thought for Joy Williams: If we're not supposed to eat animals, how come they're made out of meat?

Doug Doty  
Helena, Mont.

## Work Will Set You Free

Barbara Ehrenreich's article about the privatization of welfare, "Spinning the Poor into Gold" [August], is littered with inaccuracies, omissions, and mean-spirited personal attacks. If she had spent more time listening to the presentations at the conference she describes instead of playing fashion reporter—Ehrenreich seems strangely obsessed with the appearance of the conference attendees—she might have learned something. Instead, she prefers personal attacks to substance and dismisses discussion of performance contracts and outcome measures as nothing more than "bureaucratic rationality." But the fact is that much of the success of welfare reform will hinge not on ideology but on the details of implementation: how contracts are written, the structure of

performance incentives, and the development of sophisticated monitoring systems.

Welfare privatization is a subject about which honest people can agree. It is worthy of a thoughtful, balanced article. Unfortunately, Ehrenreich's piece fails to shed light on this important issue.

William D. Eggers  
Director of Government Reform  
Reason Public Policy Institute  
Los Angeles

It's a pity that someone like Heritage Foundation's Robert Ro was'n't in Galilee when the foundations of charity were given their vine character and stamp. One might imagine him commandeering a donkey next to the one from which a prophet of man spoke, and then crying out the evils of dependence and denouncing the shabbily dressed penitent for what he was: a blundering head-in-the-clouds liberal who, instead of providing the have-with-free fish sandwiches, should have instructed his staff to smile and humiliate the feckless until only a dozen or so diehard remained. That's the truly divine lesson learned after two millennia: you want to play the Good Samaritan, find a way to make a buck doing so.

It's not really very surprising that those caught in the future safety net will be at the mercy of the big firms licensed by the taxpayers to take it out from the poop decks of the corporate fleet. And if those treasure seekers sailing the seas to the Jerusalem of welfare privatization need a motto, a twenty-first-century Golden Rule, let me suggest a successful one, courtesy of our own country: *arbeit macht frei* ("work will set you free"). It could crown the gate arches of a major employer and serve as an ongoing lesson and warning riffraff everywhere.

John Dewitz  
Austin, Tex.

## High on the Kazakhstan

In his article "Aboard the Train" [August] Matt Bivens par-



ful picture of alleged waste, and the abuse of U.S. foreign-aid dollars in Kazakhstan. Although entertaining, the piece fails to shed light on the reality of the United States' financial assistance to Kazakhstan. It is vivid but inaccurate. Our efforts to help Kazakhstan prioritize its economy have made a dramatic difference in an economy overruled by years of central planning and mismanagement. Kazakhstan has privatized some 1,800 medium-companies as well as more than 100 smaller enterprises, and surveys have shown that a majority of Kazakhs support the reforms. The growing momentum of privatization is the result, at least in part, of sustained public-education efforts funded by the U.S. government. Privatization is not an easy concept for people raised under Communism to comprehend. Communist-corrupted attitudes toward government and led to pervasive corruption. Apparently, Bivens succumbed to the same state of mind. Otherwise, how could such an obdurate young man be led to

join in what he describes as a conspiracy to milk a government contract? Fortunately, his experience is the exception, not the rule.

*Jill Buckley*  
Assistant Administrator  
United States Agency  
for International Development  
Washington, D.C.

Congratulations to Matt Bivens for having the nerve to write the article I was warned not to. In April 1995, Burson-Marsteller hastily hired me and whisked me off to Almaty, Kazakhstan, to take over some of Bivens's responsibilities after he had left. Five months later, although significantly better off—thanks to inflated AID paychecks and other perks—I realized that we were all just working to make a very few people in the country rich.

In addition to the travesties Bivens so ably describes, there is a larger concern—namely, that our presence was subtly destabilizing the political and economic situations we had been assigned to improve. For example, our

\$1,500 average monthly rental allowances, equal to ten years' salary for much of the population, were driving housing costs out of sight. Families were consolidating their apartments to free up rental space and take advantage of this windfall. Our per diems were also forcing up the cost of food and other commodities.

I became increasingly disgusted with the situation, as Bivens did, and as I got ready to quit I made the mistake of mentioning to an American co-worker that I was writing an article that would expose what I considered the sham of AID funding in the former Soviet Union. He told the office director, who reported me to Burson headquarters in Washington. The next day I was threatened with a lawsuit if I tried such a thing. Although I toyed with the idea of taking the risk, I decided, once stateside again, to forget it and get on with my life in a more honorable way.

*Rebecca Clay*  
Pittsboro, N.C.

*Continued on page 94*

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# NOTEBOOK

## Fatted calf By Lewis H. Lapham

*h, Mother! I was born to die soon;  
Olympian Zeus the Thunderer  
gives me some honor for it."*

—Achilles, in the *Iliad*

Diana, Princess of Wales, died  
shortly before dawn on Au-  
gust 31, and less than an hour later in  
Durban, South Africa, heralds of  
Olympian news media appealed  
to her brother, Charles Edward Mau-  
nd, 9th Earl Spencer, for a sound  
bite of farm-fresh grief. Lord Spencer  
read from the standard script  
of supplying the hoped-for  
comment, he said he always knew  
the press would kill her in the  
end, and then, not yet satisfied with  
that, seemed too plain and obvious a  
comment, he went on to say that  
every proprietor and editor of  
every publication that has paid for  
a sensitive and exploitative pho-  
tography of her, encouraging greedy  
and ruthless individuals to risk every-  
thing in pursuit of Diana's image, has  
it on their hands today."

The rebuke had a fine, Victorian  
ring to it, but it presupposed an order  
of things and a system of communi-  
cation as far behind the times as the  
protocol of the British monarchy.  
The earl had been talking to Rudyard  
Kipling or Henry James, one or both  
of whom might have presented an  
objection. But he was talking to televi-  
sion cameras, which have as little in-  
terest in the uses of civility as a mob of  
wild geese. His sister was a celebri-  
ty, and celebrities are consumer prod-  
ucts to be consumed.

The earl had once worked as a cor-  
respondent for NBC, and he would  
have known that in London and Paris

and New York, the news media al-  
ready had begun to cut and paste his  
dead sister into strips of videotape and  
fillets of print. He would have guessed  
at the frenzy of the assignment edi-  
tors reaching for the phones, the ex-  
citement of the special-effects people  
composing the computer graphic of  
the accident in the tunnel under the  
Place de l'Alma, the anticipation of  
thrilling news among the technicians  
setting up the camera angles at Kens-  
ington Palace and The Mall.

Maybe the earl also remembered  
something of his reading of the  
Homeric poems. He attended Eton  
and Oxford, two schools still ac-  
quainted with the study of classical  
antiquity, and it's conceivable that he  
had in mind a sacrificial feast not un-  
like the one that Nestor, king in Py-  
los, dedicated to the worship of Zeus'  
daughter, bright-eyed Pallas Athena.  
As described in the third book of the  
*Odyssey*, the ritual required the slaugh-  
ter of "a yearling heifer/broad in the  
brow, unbroken, never yoked by men."  
Nestor instructs his goldsmith, skilled  
Laertes, to "come and sheathe the  
heifer's horns in gold," and then, after  
pouring the lustral water and scatter-  
ing the barley meal, the women shrill  
their cry, and noble Pisistratus slashes  
the heifer's throat,

Dark blood gushed forth, life ebbed from  
her limbs—

they quartered her quickly, cut the  
thighbones out

and all according to custom wrapped  
them round in fat,

a double fold sliced clean and topped  
with strips of flesh.

And the old king burned these over  
dried split wood

and over the fire poured out glistening  
wine

while young men at his side held five-  
pronged forks.

Once they'd burned the bones and tast-  
ed the organs,

they sliced the rest into pieces, spitted  
them on skewers

and raising points to the fire, broiled all  
the meats.

Which, most things considered and  
other things being equal, is what be-  
came of Diana, Princess of Wales.  
There were, of course, refinements.  
Over the last 3,000 years we've im-  
proved upon the old ways of broiling  
the meats and arranging their display  
and distribution to the suppliants  
crowding around the blood. The won-  
ders of modern technology make it  
possible to render the burning of every  
bone and the tasting of every organ as  
a sequence of pleasant images rather  
than as strips of flesh spitted on skew-  
ers and five-pronged forks. Skilled  
Laertes is not one but many, and be-  
fore noon on the day of the princess's  
death, a thousand gossip columnists  
had sheathed her memory in clichés of  
precious gold; by nightfall the televi-  
sion producers assembling two- and  
three-hour special programs had  
wrapped round in fat the pieces of what  
had been her life—Diana in her wed-  
ding carriage, Diana carrying a black  
child or riding a white horse, Diana  
triumphant and Diana at bay, Diana in  
the harbor at St.-Tropez on an Egypt-  
ian's gilded barge; at the hour of the ris-  
ing moon it remained only for the an-  
chormen to step forward into the  
studio light and pour out the wine of  
glistening bathos.

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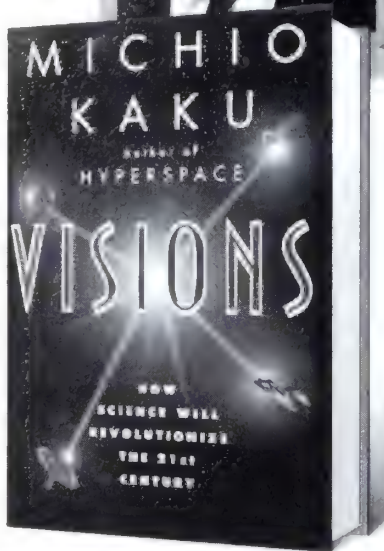


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med by the music of flutes, and next morning in London and New York the tabloid press presented news of Diana's death in a Paris traffic accident as an event comparable to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy or the sinking of the Titanic. The upmarket press confirmed the judgment, the *New York Times* voting 45 percent of its general news space to the story, the *Times of London* twenty of its twenty-five news pages.

**T**he consumption of the prince remains preserved the character of a religious festival through the whole of the week preceding the funeral service on September 6 in Westminster Abbey. Other celebrities of appropriate magnitude sprinkled the luncheon water and scattered the barley again all according to custom in ascending order of rank. First Tony Blair, the British prime minister, was near to weeping when he said of Diana that "she was the people's Princess... in our hearts and our memories forever"; then President Clinton laying the wreath of his sorrow before a press conference in Martha's Vineyard; afterward Henry Kissinger, John Travolta, Elizabeth Taylor, and an entire procession of palace sycophants and bereaved fashion-magazine editors brought forward by one or another of the television networks to thrust their fingers into the entrails and with Lady Thatcher in the *Sun*, the beacon of light has been extinguished with Paul Johnson in the *Daily Mail* that "she was a 'gem of purest serenity,'" or, most simply, with William Smith in *Newsday*, "Beyond words." As long as everybody got the tone right, it didn't matter what anybody said, because everybody was bearers of the most intimate witness were talking not about a human being but about a golden mask behind which they were welcome to imagine the presence of Aphrodite Urania, Queen Elizabeth I, or a neurotic child.

The anchorpersons regulating flows of insipid recollection invited their studio guests and distant correspondents to savor the choicest gossip. Five years ago over lunch at the Four Seasons, what was it that the princess had said about bulim-

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ntino's dresses? About her cavalier and Prince Charles on the phone to Camilla Parker Bowles? It would become of the British royally, those stodgy and unfeeling mans? Was it true that Dodi was an exile, and did she often think of de?

uring the dull moments, when ing new was to be learned from Paris police, or when the program's ers were having trouble placing next guest in front of a camera in Hampton, the networks showed of the wrecked Mercedes, shrouded by the end of the week with the ical significance of O. J. Simpson-Ford Bronco.

h most of the subjects taken up discussion (Diana's astrologer, e Charles's polo ponies and Dooy boats, Diana comforting the ted and oppressed, why Paris was s the wrong place to be seen in ist), most of the participants man-a polite murmuring of pious cant. only topic that excited all pre-anchorpersion, bearer of intimate ess, distant watcher in the Bromptoad) to the expression of a firm lignant opinion was the one about ing the press for the traffic acci- Was it possible, as Lord Spencer aid, that the press was somehow of a crime?

probably was to be expected, the unctuous professions of innocence ired on ABC, during the broadcast e first of its special programs aded to what the network billed as Royal Tragedy." The three prin—Diane Sawyer, Peter Jennings, Barbara Walters—periodically inoted their complacent sucking of narrow from the bones of won- l, wonderful Diana to disapprove, an air of condescension and dis- of those awful paparazzi on mo- cles (jackals, shameless vermin, cum, beasts) who were no friends e First Amendment. Peter men- d ethics. Barbara said, "You know, people could even accuse you e, Diane, occasionally, perhaps, ing too far." Diane, quoting a n newspaper, said, "We have rules govern hunters stalking prey in rest. Can't we at least offer some to the young people who live in laces?" Leaning closer to the table

and confiding to her co-hosts her deep- er knowledge of the paparazzi and their contemptible motives, Barbara said, sotto voce, "They take money."

So does Barbara; so do the editors of *Newsweek* and *Vogue*; so did everybody else who dined that week on Diana *rôti* or Diana *en croûte*, but none of them had the grace to acknowledge their debt to the peasants on black motorcycles who fatten the sacrificial cattle and herd them, squealing, through the streets of Paris or across the hillsides of the Cotswolds and the Côte d'Azur.

**L**ike the making of sausage or violin strings, the minting of celebrity is not a pretty business. The news media affix price tags to the carcasses of temporary divinity, but in return for the gifts of wealth and applause, they require the king of the month or queen for a day to make the remnants of his or her humanity available to the ritual of the public feast. What was once a subject becomes an object—a corporate logo or a T-shirt, a product convenient to a supermarket checkout counter, a brand name capable of awakening with its "personal touch" the spirit dormant in a basketball sneaker or a bottle of perfume.

The bargain is a Faustian one, but not all of the contracts end in bloodshed. Sometimes the individual in question need only consent to a loss of freedom, of speech as well as movement; sometimes it is sufficient merely to submit to one of the several forms of castration and decay that render the celebrity as harmless as a drop-by by Kim Basinger or a song by Barry Manilow. But Diana was a celebrity of the most vulnerable and therefore the most nourishing type, a victim for all seasons whom her brother memorialized in his eulogy as "a very insecure person," marked by her "deep feelings of unworthiness." She accepted the media's terms of cruel endearment with the pathetic gratitude of a born non-entity, avid for the limelight because she hoped to find the needle of her self in the haystack of her press clippings. Together with her brilliant smile and the appearance of having been granted every wish in Aladdin's lamp—youth, beauty, pretty dresses, a prince for a husband, and Elton John for a

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pet — she projected a sense of loneliness and loss. Her fans cherished her for her neediness, which was as desperate and as formless as their own.

Like the Greek kings in sandy Pylos sacrificing bulls to Poseidon, the news media hold up to their audiences what their audiences wish to see, and because the television camera invests authority in feeling instead of thought, the shows of weakness become the proofs of strength. Divine celebrity stands on the altars of self-dramatization, and, as the crowds in the London streets made clear to the Queen of England during the week of Diana's death and transfiguration, we live in an age that casts the victim as the hero of the play. Who listens to the stories of people who don't make of their lives a chronicle of endless woe?

During the last days of her life, the princess apparently wished to divorce the cameras that always had loved her and that she once regarded as her life-long friends. She had as little chance of escape as a parrot in a cage or an elephant in a zoo. Too many people had spent too much time and money machine-tooling her persona for the market in daydreams.

Reading the newspapers on the morning after her funeral, I tried to recall the names of other twentieth-century celebrities blown up into balloons of comparable size. It was a short list. Omitting people famous for their works and deeds as well as for their images (Elvis Presley, Eva Perón, Jack and Bobby Kennedy), I counted only the figures who, like Diana, served as pretty pieces of blank paper on which their fans could draw their own fantastic scrawls. Within this narrower classification, I noticed that of those who had been my near contemporaries—Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Grace Kelly—the best known died young, and I was surprised to discover that although for periods of ten or fifteen years I must have seen one or another of their photographs five or six times a day, I could remember almost nothing of the fictions that had been their lives. A familiar pose, a song, a scene in a mediocre movie—little else.

Among the persons denominated as celebrities in the earlier years of the twentieth century, Charles Lindbergh most closely resembled Diana,

but only in the degree of magnification. Lindbergh didn't accept the gain offered by the press. He was twenty-five years old when he flew the *St. Louis* from New York to Paris in May 1927, but, unlike Diana, he how to read the contract guaranteeing the specious promise of immortality. He took off from Roosevelt Field in the rain, an obscure stunt pilot somewhere in the Midwest with a quart of water and five sandwiches that he had picked up at a diner in Queens; thirty-three and a half years later he was a demigod alighting on the earth at Le Bourget in a crowd of 100,000 people who knew him as the heaven-sent sign from Zeus, the deliverer. The surge of emotion on the world like a pulse of light. Chased by crowds in Paris, and then again by crowds in Brussels and London, Lindbergh returned to America on a plane sent by President Coolidge, an ticker-tape parade in New York better attended and more tumultuous than the ones celebrating the victory of World War I and II.

For the next few months women braced him in the streets; laundresses stole his shirts for souvenirs; his checks went uncashed because their value was his autograph. Well-wishers in sixty-nine countries sent 15,000 presents—mostly jewels and medals, also a dress sword, a Gutenberg Bible, and a cane carved from a tree in Mark Twain's garden. The manufacturer of celebrity offered movies, news columns, books, a vaudeville act.

Lindbergh took none of the presents, gave the presents to a museum, and learned to avoid photographers. When his child was kidnapped and killed in 1932, he was again hounded by the press in all the ways that have since become familiar to Sly Stallone and Demi Moore. He moved to Europe for four years, long enough for his name to fall out of the newspapers and the mouths of his admirers, but before returning for his term of exile, he explained his reason for going to a reporter for the *New York Times*: "At first you stand the spotlight in your eyes. It blinds you. Others can see you, but you cannot see them."

Neither could Diana. Nor could the fatted calf in Pylos, blinded by the light, startled by the knife.



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# HARPER'S INDEX

- Ratio of years by which Mir has outlived its life expectancy to years by which Boris Yeltsin has outlived his : 2:3
- Amount NASA has paid Russia since 1994 to let U.S. astronauts train aboard Mir : \$470,000,000
- Portion of all U.S. space missions carrying nuclear material that have failed : 1/8
- Factor by which the B-2 stealth-bomber's maintenance hours have exceeded its flight hours since last year : 124
- Factor by which *Forbes* magazine's estimate of the net worth of Russia's security chief exceeds his own : 75,000
- Rank of "the press" among the enemies Belarus president Alexander Lukashenko considers his worst : 1
- Number of radio and television stations shut down by the Yugoslav government since last year : 76
- Number of U.S. interceptor jets sent into Bosnian airspace in September to block "anti-NATO" broadcasts : 3
- tion of the President's Gulf War-illness advisory panel who now believe that chemical weapons may be a factor : 5/11
- Number of months since the panel reported that such weapons were an "unlikely" factor : 9
- Chance that a Kuwaiti citizen has the right to vote : 1 in 7
- Number of presidential nominees for U.S. government positions denied a Senate hearing since 1987 : 154
- Number of people that Pope John Paul II has beatified or canonized since 1978 : 1,049
- Tons of flowers and other tokens deposited outside Princess Diana's palace in the week following her death : 11,200
- Months after Paula Jones filed suit against President Clinton that the I.R.S. decided to audit her : 40
- Number of months former senator Pat Schroeder has been a contributing editor of *Glamour* : 10
- Amount of soft money raised by political parties this year for every campaign-finance-reform bill introduced : \$404,000
- Percentage of white Americans who say that they would vote for Colin Powell over Al Gore for president : 53
- Percentage of black Americans who say this : 35
- Average number of political ads aired on U.S. TV each day of last year's election season : 3,585
- Amount Bob Dole spent last year on political advertising on the Food Channel : \$22,000
- Number of Fowl Balls, a snack made from deep-fried turkey testicles, sold last year at Denver's Coors Field : 243
- Number of NBA players with shaved heads in the season before Michael Jordan first shaved his : 6
- Number last season : 76
- Amount by which Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo's 1998 team contract exceeds that of Michael Jordan : \$9,000,000
- Average percentage of teenagers in the world's 44 largest countries who recognize the Chicago Bulls logo : 93
- Months after a Hard Rock Cafe opened in Beirut last winter that the U.S. lifted its ban on travel in Lebanon : 7
- Days after Mexico's drug czar was arrested this year for corruption that his lawyer was arrested for bribing jurors : 165
- Years it took a prisoner injured at the 1975 Attica prison riots to win a judgment against New York State last June : 26
- Number of other Attica prisoners' cases pending : 1,280
- Number of federal wiretap warrants granted for criminal investigations last year : 581
- Number granted for espionage investigations by the U.S. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court : 839 (see page 78)
- Average number of Freedom of Information Act requests filed each day last year : 1,644
- Percentage of these filed by companies seeking information about government contracts and regulatory loopholes : 75
- Average number of new millionaires created in Silicon Valley each day last year : 64
- Year in which Mattel sold its last Pilgrim Barbie : 1995
- Number of Thanksgiving turkeys granted a presidential pardon since 1947 : 50
- Price a Dallas firm charges for a 60-minute tour retracing JFK's 1963 motorcade route in a period convertible : \$25
- Price last paid at auction for Lee Harvey Oswald's toe tag : \$6,600

Figures cited have been adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of September 1997. "Harper's Index" is a registered trademark.





Detail of U.S. one-dollar Federal Reserve note  
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# READINGS

[Proposal]

## CURBING NATURE'S PAPARAZZI

From "The Problem with Wildlife Photography," by Bill McKibben, in the Fall issue of Double-Take. McKibben is the author, most recently, of *Hope, Human and Wild*.

**T**he art of wildlife photography employs quite a few people scattered around the country. Film-makers supply hour upon hour of video for PBS, the major networks, and cable channels. Still photographers take pictures for magazines, calendars, books, and advertisements, and they market countless trips for amateurs and aspiring professionals, teaching them the tricks of the trade. Their images do a lot of good: from Flipper and Jacques Cousteau to the mountain lion nuzzling her kit on your latest mailing from an environmental group, they've helped change how we see the wild. I've seen neighbors of mine, who had no use for wolves, begin to melt during a slide show about the creatures. It is no great exaggeration to say that dolphin-safe tuna flows directly from the barrel of a Canon, that without Kodak there'd be no Endangered Species Act.

But it's not a completely benign enterprise. In the wild, photographers often need to subtly harass wildlife to get their shots: to camp near watering holes, say, where their very pres-

ence may unnerve and scatter creatures. Worse, and less recognized, is a sort of conceptual problem. After a lifetime of exposure to nature shows and magazine photos, we arrive at the woods conditioned to expect splendor and are surprised when the parking lot does not contain a snarl of animals mating and killing one another. Because the only images we see are close-ups, we've lost much of our sense of the calm and quotidian beauty of the natural world, of the fact that animals are usually preoccupied with hiding or wandering around looking for food.

There is something frankly pornographic about the animal horror videos (*Fangs!*) marketed on late-night TV, and even about some of the shots you see in something as staid as *Natural History* magazine. Here is an emerald boa eating a parrot—the odds, according to the photographers I talked to, were “jillions to one” that it was a wild shot. Indeed, the photographer who took it boasted to *People* magazine about how, in order to get other dramatic shots, he'd spray-painted ferrets to convert them to the endangered blackfooted kind, and how he'd hoisted tame and declawed jaguars into tree branches for good shots, and starved piranhas so that they would attack with great ferocity. Another photographer took a game stab at defending the shot of the emerald boa munching the parrot: “It very graphically illustrates the relationship between higher and lower vertebrates,” he said. So it does, but that's a little like saying that Miss September



graphically illustrates the development of the mammalian gland in *Homo sapiens*.

Even worse, perhaps, is the way the constant flow of images inculcates the sense that there's actually something wrong with the world. How

can there really be a shortage of whooping cranes when you've seen a thousand images of them, seen ten times more images than there are actually whooping cranes left in the wild? We're rarely shown a photograph of the empty trees where there are no baboons anymore; whatever few baboons remain are dutifully pursued until they're captured on film, and even if all the captions are about their horrid plight, the essential message of the picture remains: baboons.

[Wild Problems]

## LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR

*From a work sheet distributed in August to students at Elsie Robertson High School in Lancaster, Texas. After school officials received complaints from students and parents, six teachers at the high school were suspended without pay for using the work sheet, versions of which have been circulating among teachers throughout the country. According to Scott Martin, head of the math department at Elsie Robertson, the work sheet was used to let students "know that we have a sense of humor and a sense of what goes on in the world."*

1. Johnny has an AK 47 with an 80 round clip. If he misses 6 out of 10 shots and shoots 13 times during each drive-by shooting, how many drive-by shootings can he attempt before he has to reload?

2. Jose has 2 ounces of cocaine. He sells an 8 ball to Jackson for \$320 and 2 grams to Billy for \$85 per gram. What is the street value of the balance of the cocaine if he doesn't cut it?

3. Rufus is pumping for 3 girls. If the price is \$65 for each trick, how many tricks will each girl have to turn so that Rufus can pay for his \$800-per-day crack habit?

4. Willie gets \$200 for stealing a BMW, \$50 for a Chevy, and \$100 for a 4 X 4. If he has stolen 2 BMWs and 3 4 X 4s, how many Chevys will he have to steal to make \$800?

5. Raoul is in prison for 6 years for murder. He got \$10,000 for the hit. If his common-law wife is spending \$100 per month, how much money will be left when he gets out of prison?

6. If the average spray can covers 22 square feet and the average letter is 3 square feet, how many letters can a tagger spray with 3 cans of paint?

7. Hector knocked up 6 girls in his gang. There are 27 girls in the gang. What percent of girls in the gang has Hector knocked up?

At this point we could—indeed we should—start talking about a new ethic. People have tried, from time to time, to promulgate ethics for most of the arts, and nature photography is no exception. Photographer Daniel Dancer, writing recently in *Wild Earth* magazine, suggested using photos for advocacy purposes—shooting the clear-cut next to the forest, for instance. One editor envisions sending a photographer out to document, say, the hour-by-hour life of a snake rather than a young grizzly striking poses at a game farm. Reading and talking to such thinkers, though, it's easy to find a note of resignation—the deep suspicion that such rhetoric is not going to affect very quickly or very profoundly the marketplace in which photographers operate.

"A big problem we see is an editor who says, 'I want this kind of picture,' and then the word gets out," says Chuck Jonkel of the Wildlife Film Festival. "Editors will say, 'Give us a picture of a caribou running full tilt, and we'll give you \$1,700.' Someone's going to hire a helicopter and run the shit out of the caribou to get that \$1,700. I don't blame the photographer for that—I blame the editors." If one photographer or editor falters, chances are that there will be another to take his place. Dancer offers the wise advice of Wendell Berry that "one must begin in one's own life the private solutions that can only in turn become public solutions." That is so. But my work on environmental issues has made me wary of completely private solutions, for the momentum of our various tragedies makes the slow conversion of small parts of the society insufficient. Aren't we ethically impelled to also try to imagine ways that such private solutions might turn into public and widespread practice?

It's precisely for that reason that wildlife photography interests me so much. It's a small enough world that, at least for purposes of argument, you could postulate real changes. Suppose the eight or nine magazines that run most of the nature photos and the three or four top TV nature shows formed among them a cooperative, or clearinghouse, for wildlife images and announced that, up to a certain date, anyone could mail them as many slides or reels of





"Betty," by New York City artist Valerie Shaff. Her work is currently on display at the Bridgewater/Lustberg Gallery in New York City.

film as they wished. And after that date they wouldn't take any new submissions. Then, when the editors of *Natural History* decided they needed some elephant photos, the staff of the cooperative agency could send over a wide array to choose from. For the fact is, there are already plenty of elephant photos in the world (when *Wildlife Conservation Magazine* was planning a piece on elephants a few years ago, its editors reviewed ten thousand slides). And since most of the competing magazines and TV shows would belong to the cooperative, commercial pressure might diminish; no one else would have a two-inch-away close-up of the golden tamarind monkey either.

If some member of the consortium had a good reason for needing a new picture—if there were a new species or a new behavior that needed illustrating, or someone was needed to accompany a scientific expedition—then the cooperative could assign a photographer, along with strict instructions about conduct: about, say, how far away to

stay from the animals. These measures might solve some of the ethical problems surrounding the industry's treatment of animals. It's also possible that such a cooperative agency could eventually begin to deal with the larger questions—for instance, over time, it could cull from its stock extreme close-ups and other kinds of photos that miseducate viewers about the natural world. It's the kind of place where a new ethic might *adhere*, might grow into something powerful.

Imagining institutions allows you to test the strength of the ethic on which they're based against very real and practical objections. In this case, the most obvious drawback is that the cooperative would put photographers out of work or force them to find new subjects, for if the agency worked as planned, it would need very few new wildlife photos annually. This potential clearinghouse for wildlife photos would announce, in effect: "We've got enough images now; we can recycle them more or less forever; please don't bother taking any more." And



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since negatives don't really degrade with use, that would be that. But this, we intuitively feel, is not fair. Who am I, or you, to tell someone else how he can or can't make a living?

It is an almost unknown thing in our society to say, "That's enough." And it sounds especially heretical in any creative endeavor. The word "censorship" rises unbidden to one's lips. And even if you can convince yourself that it's not really censorship (it's not the government, after all; it's no more than some magazine telling you that it won't print your story for whatever damn reason; it's editing), even so, it seems repressive. It is repressive. It's the imposition of a new taboo. Consumers aren't supposed to have taboos; they're supposed to consume. And consume we do: not just goods and services but images, ideas, knowledge. Nothing is off-limits. So there's something a little creepy about saying, "We'll be buying no new photos of wildebeests. We don't think it's a good idea to be taking them." Do we really want any new taboos?

**A**s I've become more interested in environmental matters, I've thought a lot about these questions of restraint—about when one's curiosity or creative impulse can be bane as well as boon, about whether there are places where taboos once more make sense. The answers are easier to see when the questions concern things, not ideas. Clearly, for instance, we'd be better off environmentally if as a culture we frowned on automobiles, if we said that the freedom they afforded was not worth the cost in terms of global warming, suburban sprawl, and so forth. And a taboo against the next, ever-larger version of the Ford Explorer, even if it somehow developed, wouldn't seem a real threat to the human spirit.

But the debate about limiting ideas is one we're incapable of having, because we operate under the assumption that the limitation of creativity is repellent. We take as a given that we should find out everything we can, develop everything we can, photograph and write about everything we can, and then let the marketplace decide what to do with it. By definition, therefore, if it sells it is good. If we can clone animals, say, then we will; to suggest otherwise is to stand against not only free enterprise but also the free imagination. But in our blind defense of these things that seem "right," we may be short-circuiting the process of thinking things through as a culture, leaving ourselves no way to entertain the possibility of restraint.

And yet self-restraint is a uniquely human capacity, belonging as exclusively to us as flight belongs to the birds. It's the one gift no other creature possesses—even as a possibility.

[Testimony]

## WELFARE AS THEY KNOW IT

*From affidavits given this summer by plaintiffs in *Capers v. Giuliani*, a class-action suit filed by the New York Legal Assistance Group, the Welfare Law Center, and the National Employment Law Project on behalf of New York City workfare participants assigned to the departments of Sanitation and Transportation. In February 1995, the Giuliani Administration dramatically expanded the program under which the city's welfare recipients are required to work for their benefits. The workfare participants named as plaintiffs in *Capers v. Giuliani* testified that they experienced hazardous working conditions on a daily basis, including limited or no access to protective clothing, toilets, and drinking water; in August, a State Supreme Court justice ruled that the city was obligated to provide the 5,000 workfare participants assigned to the departments of Sanitation and Transportation with these necessities. City officials are appealing the ruling.*

*Tamika Capers, age twenty-one*

Since February 26, 1997, I have been cleaning highways and the areas next to highways in the Work Experience Program (WEP) for the New York City Department of Transportation. The work consists of raking, sweeping, picking up garbage, cutting tall grass by hand with a long-handled Weedwacker, and clipping tree branches overhead.

While we clean the highways, cars, trucks, and tractor-trailers whiz by only a few feet away. Cones are put up to protect us, but they are spaced so far apart that the cars ignore them and swerve inside when the traffic is heavy. Last month, a car went out of control and ran up on the grass, heading right for two of my co-workers, who had to dash out of the way to avoid being hit. When the car returned to the highway, it stopped, causing a three-car pileup.

We have no access to a toilet either in the parking lot where we are picked up each morning or out on the highway. If we need to urinate or move our bowels, we have to squat behind a tree or bush or ask one of our co-workers to hold up a plastic bag to shield us from the passing cars. We have not been given insect repellent, and I am afraid to relieve myself outdoors, because I will be exposed to the many biting insects flying and crawling around us. My stomach cramps from holding my urine. During my menstrual period, there is no place to go to change my pad. I have to wait until the end of our shift, and by then my clothes are soaked with blood.





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*Anastasia Smith and John Lee*

On March 14, 1997, I began my WEP assignment on a cleaning crew of four people. We sweep twenty to thirty blocks of street per day in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. Some-

times our group travels in a van behind a garbage truck. When we see trash, the van stops and the four of us get out of the van, sweep up the mess, and put it into the garbage truck. The supervisor sits in the van the entire time.

I keep a log of my daily activities in WEP. On June 18, while riding in the van, we came across two dead cats and two dead dogs. They had been dumped by the side of the road. Because I have no gloves, I had to pick them up with my bare hands. The animals had been run over by automobiles and were oozing blood and entrails. When I picked up the animals with my bare hands to throw them into the garbage truck, the guts splattered on my shoes and pants. My co-worker vomited. My supervisor, sitting in the van, said nothing. I have seen other people who were terminated by my supervisor for refusing to pick up things, and I was afraid that if I refused to leave the van or left the carcasses in the gutter I would be terminated also.

Because I have no dust mask or eye protection, I suffer from the dust that blows up in my face while I am sweeping. I have glaucoma, which requires me to use pilocarpine hydrochloride drops four times a day. The dust gets in my eyes and dries up the solutions. I can hardly see by lunchtime. I have only one eye that I can see from now, and I am worried that I may eventually lose my sight completely.

I have trouble sleeping for the first time in my life. I toss and turn at night because of the pain in my eyes and back and from the stress of having to endure the daily humiliation of this program.

*Mery Mejia, age thirty-seven*

Since February 1997 I have been working on a crew that cleans the ramps and service roads near the highways. I cut weeds and grass all morning by swinging a long wooden stick with a flat metal blade. The tool is heavy and hurts my shoulders after a few minutes. I'm about five feet tall, and some of the grass is taller than I am.

While working, I see rats everywhere along the roads. They don't bite us, because we scream and run away. They are about eight inches long, with long, stringy tails. They are sometimes right next to us. There are also all sorts of plants, maybe poison ivy, that give me rashes. But the supervisors give us no work clothes, either in the winter or the summer. The only things we get for protection are an orange vest, a pair of cotton gloves, and a hard hat. The gloves and the hard hat are filthy, but I am not allowed to take anything home to wash it. They gave out boots for one week in February, but they were all size 12 and did not fit me.

[Reminders]

## ANTIBACTERIAL CLASSICS

*From posters placed inside the doors of public restroom stalls as part of an ongoing campaign developed by the Allegheny County Health Department and Ketchum Advertising to promote hand washing in the Pittsburgh area, where a local "observational survey" showed that the percentage of people who wash their hands before leaving rest rooms is "much worse" than in the rest of the country.*

Scarlett O'Hara was not beautiful, but men seldom realized it when caught by her charm as the Tarleton twins were. Nor did they realize when they grew frightfully ill that it was the touch of her magnolia-white skin that made them so sick. Disregarding all ladylike behavior, Scarlett had not washed her hands after attending to her business in the lady's parlor. Her delicate hands touched those of the twins and caused the spread of an atrocious bacterial disease.

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago, having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I solemnly took to the ship in a blind effort to appease my drizzling soul. Having a shortage of fresh water on board, the men resigned themselves to not washing their hands after the moving of their bowels, causing a severe occurrence of stomach cramps and other unpleasant digestive symptoms. Perhaps if I had taken solace in the land, I would never have set foot on that cursed ship.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, it was the era of people not washing their hands after using the bathroom, it was the era of people eating with their hands and falling violently ill after transferring bacteria to one another. In short, it was not a very sanitary period.





photographs, by Roberto Huarcaya, are part of a series entitled *Continuum*, in which four generations of the artist's family are photographed submerged in glass containers. Huarcaya and his father are shown here. The series is included in *Broken Vessel*, a traveling exhibition by Peruvian artists. Huarcaya lives in Lima.

Because there is no place to go to the bathroom, I do not drink water. This makes me feel like I am suffocating. When I work I feel nauseated and light-headed, and I get terrible headaches. When I finally do go to the bathroom my urine is very dark brown, which makes me concerned about my kidneys. One of the other women in my crew fainted from the heat, but we caught her before her head hit the ground.

When I work, the dust gets on my clothes, in my eyes, and in my nose. When I blow my nose during work the mucus is dark brown because I don't have a dust mask. I change my clothes when I get home, but I have to wash them with all the other family clothes, because I cannot afford to wash them separately. Sometimes my clothes are black with dirt.

My health and my spirits have been worn down by this program.

*Omar Torres, age thirty-eight*

I never received an orientation or any type of preparation before beginning my WEP as-

signment in June of 1995. Not once on the job have I been advised what type of clothing to wear. Once I was assigned to clean graffiti off of a fleet of fifty garbage trucks. I was never provided with goggles, though I used heavy equipment to spray graffiti cleaner onto the garbage trucks. I have scars on my legs where I was burned by splashing graffiti-cleaning fluid.

Before beginning any particular job for the day, the supervisors distribute the orange safety vests that WEP workers are required to wear. The vests at the garage where I am based are kept in a cat-litter box on the floor. I am not allowed to take the vest home to clean it, nor am I allowed to keep one for my individual use.

I cannot take my lunch to work, because there is nowhere to store it. I am not allowed to keep any belongings, including food, at the garage. I cannot carry it with me while I am cleaning the streets, because there is no clean place to keep it. Some people tie their lunch to their garbage barrel handle.

My supervisor refuses to listen to my problems. When I verbally challenge his opinions





*Receiving Treaty Money, by Allen Sapp. The painting was on display this fall at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Sapp, a Cree Indian, lives in North Battleford, Saskatchewan.*

about working conditions, he threatens to terminate me. I am very frustrated by the unjust way I am treated. The supervisors are like overseers on a plantation. They constantly threaten the WEP workers with sanctions and termination. They try to brainwash you into thinking that no lawyer can help you, and tell us not to talk to them. Daily I have to think about whether a store will let me use the bathroom. It is constant stress. I feel like we are treated as if we were not human beings. I should not have to go through this just to work.

*Sylvia Ruff, age 49, is a woman.*

Since March 1997 I have worked for the New York City Department of Sanitation, sweeping up streets and picking up garbage. The garbage includes broken glass, nails, syringes, needles, used diapers, used condoms, used tampons, and dead rats. We also encounter a lot of half-empty containers with strange-smelling liquids in them and a lot of dirty, discarded clothing, which may be infested with germs.

There is nowhere to wash your hands before lunch, and my hands are often dirty from pick-

ing up garbage. I always worry about germs and often I do not eat. And now that the weather is hot, I get terribly thirsty on the job, but there is no bathroom to use and I am afraid of having to urinate with nowhere to go. Even if I dared to drink, there is nowhere at the work site to get water. The supervisors threaten to sanction us when we leave our route to go to a restaurant and get water.

One day in early June when it rained, I was given a lightweight orange poncho to wear, which left my forearms and my legs exposed. The hood was designed so that I could not see to my right or left. Since I need to see oncoming traffic, I could not use the hood. It was pouring rain, and we were out for hours, standing in puddles as we tried to sweep. I got soaked through. I had to wring out the sleeves on my own jacket, and when I got home my feet looked like prunes.

The fear of humiliation I face because I have nowhere to relieve myself is degrading. The exposure to chemicals and waste products is unhealthy for me. I am worried about bringing my polluted clothing into the house and endanger-



ing my son's health as well as my own. Not knowing what I am being exposed to makes me constantly anxious, and it is a daily struggle to overcome this. The constant threats by the supervisors to sanction us for leaving our route and the inhumane working conditions make it seem like we're on a chain gang instead of in a work-experience program. I have been told—and I believe—that this work will not lead to a job. As long as we are forced to do this dead-end work, we at least need access to bathrooms and clean water, adequate personal protective clothing and equipment, and meaningful training about the hazards we face.

[Death Sentences]

## CHINA'S CRIMES AND PUNISHMENT

From "The Death Penalty in China: Breaking Records, Breaking Rules," a report released in August by Amnesty International. China, which instituted its "Strike Hard" anticrime campaign in 1996, sentenced an estimated 6,100 people to death last year; of these, at least 4,367 have been executed. According to the report, Chinese authorities maintain that the death penalty is applied "only to criminals who have committed the most heinous crimes."

JANUARY 2, 1996

*Sentenced to death.* Four unnamed men—reportedly a government official, a policeman, a businessman, and an ex-soldier. Accused of illegal elephant hunting.

JANUARY 30–FEBRUARY 1, 1996

*Executed.* Chen Jiuqiang, Li Jiaming, Lo Yun, Xie Guichun, and thirty-four unnamed others. Reportedly executed to "maintain social stability" before the Chinese New Year.

MARCH 19, 1996

*Sentenced to death.* Wang Xiang. Accused of beating up a man on behalf of a friend after a road-rage incident.

MARCH 29, 1996

*Sentenced to death.* Wang Hongjun. Accused of severing the head of an antique statue of Buddha, which he sold for \$36. He was not represented by a lawyer and had only a middle-school education. He did not know the value of the antique until the judge informed him, at which point "his handcuffed hands did not stop shaking. He had thought that he would

only serve a prison sentence if he was caught."

APRIL 24, 1996

*Executed.* Li Shanwu and Wu Debin, both peasants. Accused of stealing twenty-eight television sets.

MAY 14, 1996

*Executed.* Tao Zhenping. Accused of embezzling \$1,300 and setting fire to the office when he feared discovery.

MAY 16, 1996

*Executed.* Yuan Yujin. Accused of stealing four motorcycles.

MAY 25, 1996

*Executed.* Yan Yanwang. Accused of kidnapping. Reportedly said that he had got the idea from watching television and that "I deserve to be executed for my crime."

[Apology]

## FIRST ACNE, NOW THIS!

From a correction in the July 17 issue of the Chicago Daily Herald.

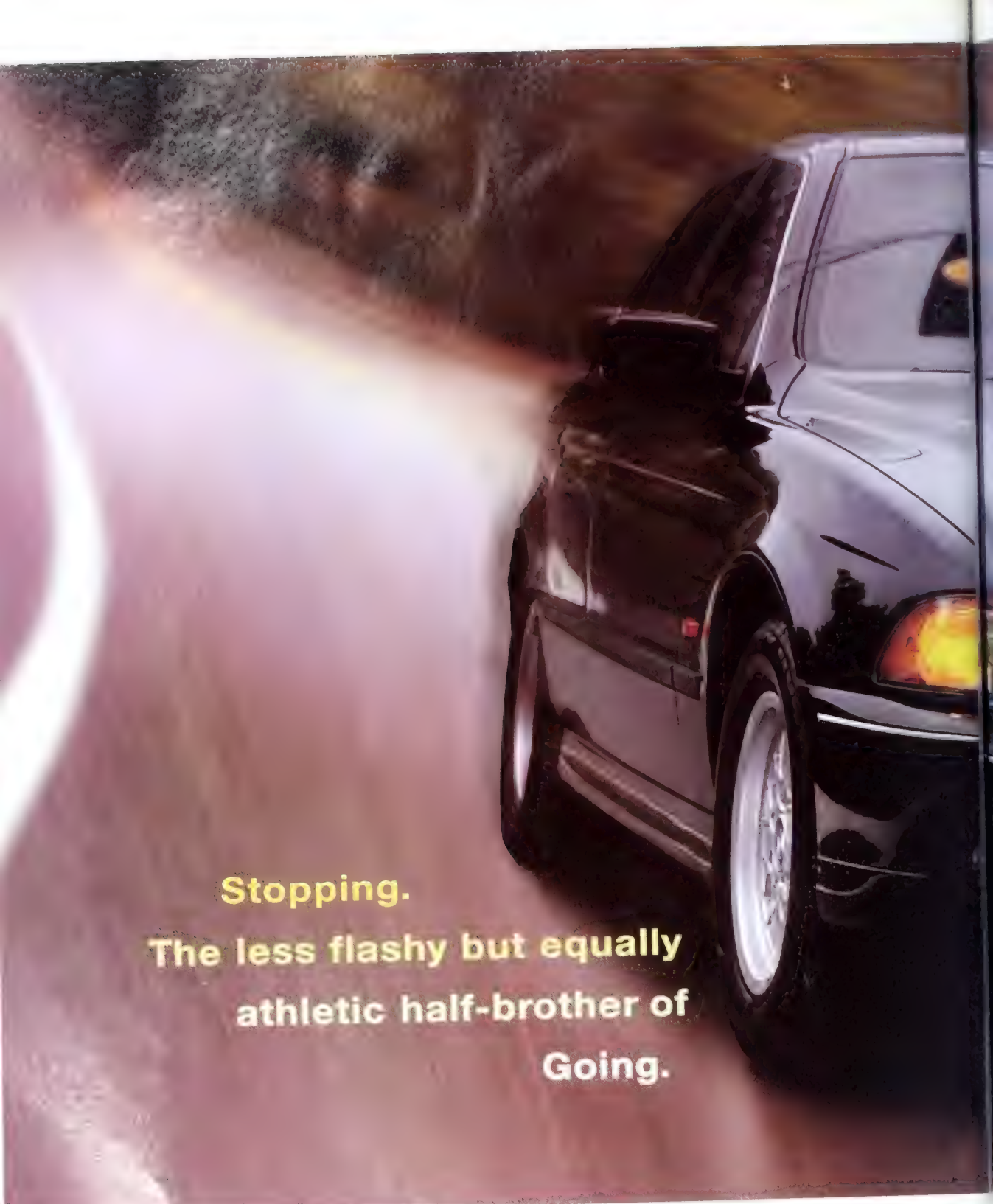
**I**n a chart of area death-row inmates that appeared on page 10 of yesterday's paper, we identified Christopher Thomas, a twenty-three-year-old Chicagoan who shot a man to death for \$61 during a robbery in 1994. The photo we ran, however, was of another Christopher Thomas, a fifteen-year-old honor student at West Chicago High School.

This Christopher Thomas is one of those good, hardworking young people who don't get enough credit for earning good grades and participating in the community. His photo found its way into our files when he ran for northern district representative of the Student Council.

The Christopher Thomas who is on death row is a killer who went by the alias of Dante Hill. He has had numerous scrapes with the law and has been in and out of detention homes and prisons for the past eight years.

We apologize to Christopher, his family, friends, and neighbors.





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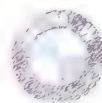
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\*Based on 0-60 mph times available in manufacturers' reported data (where not available, based on published magazine test data) for production sedans. Based on road tests by *Car and Driver* and *Road and Track* conducted between August 1993 and June 1997 on dry pavement, 100-120 mph.



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[Scale]

## TROUBLE AT THE REFERENCE DESK

From "Classes of Problem Patrons in Public Libraries with Representative Behaviors," a chart by Bruce Shuman in *Patron Behavior in Libraries: A Handbook of Positive Approaches to Negative Situations*, published by the American Library Association. According to Shuman, who is the editor of *Library & Archival Security*, the classifications below allow library personnel to respond to disruptive behavior "with a degree of consistency."

Class III NUISANCE (annoying but harmless)	Class II UNCLEAR (potentially serious)	Class I DANGEROUS (very serious)
knuckle cracking coughing begging voyeuristic sleeping humming laundering amorous (consensual) eating laughing chattering lonely malodorous	exhibitionist drunk physically ill highly emotional narcotized continually pacing homeless preaching zealously staring soliciting belonging to gang bringing pets hallucinating	armed verbally abusive predatory paranoid child molesting emotionally disturbed sexually deviant openly hostile vandalizing threatening combative drug selling committing arson

JUNE 14, 1996

*Sentenced to death.* Li Kuan and Lu Wanliang. Accused of stealing mules.

JUNE 21, 1996

*Executed.* Zhang Jiazi. Reportedly executed for the "highway robbery" of \$24 and a watch.

JUNE 25, 1996

*Executed.* Hou Zhijian and Wei Xueming. The two were executed after a public sentencing rally in which they were convicted of the theft of ballpoint pens and badminton rackets.

JULY 24, 1996

*Executed.* Lu Qigang, a worker at a horticultural farm. Reportedly used needles and thorns to stab female cyclists in the buttocks.

AUGUST 31, 1996

*Executed.* Wang Qiu, a self-styled "golden goddess" and acclaimed mystic. She was given valuable gifts by her followers, among whom was a young girl who was sick but who ultimately died. It is unclear on what charge Wang was arrested and executed.

OCTOBER 16, 1996

*Executed.* Yi Zhirong, Li Deqiu, and Yi Zhi-tong, all peasants. Reportedly stole packaging for cigarette and alcohol brands from printing shops and sold them to people making fake products.

[Essay]

## THE MARRIAGE OF HIP AND SQUARE

From *The Conquest of Cool*, by Thomas Frank, to be published this month by the University of Chicago Press. Frank is the editor of the quarterly *The Baffler*.

**F**or as long as America is torn by culture wars, the 1960s will remain the historical terrain of conflict. Although popular memories of that era are increasingly vague and generalized, we understand "the Sixties" almost in-



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significantly in the decade of the big change—the beautiful fifties, in an era whose taste and tastelessness, not just in literature, somehow determined the quality in which we are now condemned to live. And whether the Sixties are celebrated or lamented, the counterculture—composed of anti-institutional radicals of all stripes, from campus leftists to New York bo-

hemians to California hippies—is invariably cast as the agent of change.

For conservatives, the world that the Sixties left us is a distinctly unhappy one. The decade represents nothing so much as a fall from grace, the loss of a golden age of consensus, the end of an Edenic epoch of shared values and safe centrism. Dark images of the treason and excess of the Sixties fill shelves of bestsellers from Alan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* to Robert Bork's *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*. And the fable of the doubly victimized soldiers in Vietnam, betrayed first by liberals and doves in government and then spat upon by members of the counterculture, has become such a routine trope that its invocation—and the resulting outrage—requires only the mouthing of a few standard references.

By contrast, the leftist myth of the counterculture is one of personal transformation through ecstatic nonconformity, through rebellion against the "mass society" of the 1950s and everything it stood for: racial, religious, and sexual intolerance; look-alike commuters clad in gray flannel suits; identical prefabricated houses stretching moderately and reasonably to the horizon. The only character who offered hope of resisting this oppressive repidness was the figure that Norman Mailer, in his seminal 1957 essay "The White Negro," called the "Hipster," an "American existentialist" with a taste for jazz, sex, drugs, and the slang and mores of black society. In this myth, the Sixties' revolt of the young against the mass society is thus seen as a joyous and even a glorious cultural flowering, albeit one that, tragically, was quickly co-opted by the mainstream itself. The story ends with the noble idealism of the New Left in ruins and the counterculture sold out to its original antagonists, Hollywood and the networks and the rest of corporate America.

Conflicting though they may seem, these two accounts of Sixties culture agree on a number of basic points. Both assume that the counterculture was what it said it was; that is, a fundamental opponent of the capitalist order. Thinkers on both sides concur, further, that the counterculture is the appropriate symbol—if not the actual historical cause—of the gigantic cultural shifts that transformed the United States and that permanently rearranged Americans' cultural priorities. They also agree that these changes constituted a radical break with existing American mores, that they were just as transgressive, menacing, and revolutionary as both countercultural participants and foes believed them to be. And all agree, lastly, that the role of American business was a peripheral and secondary one.

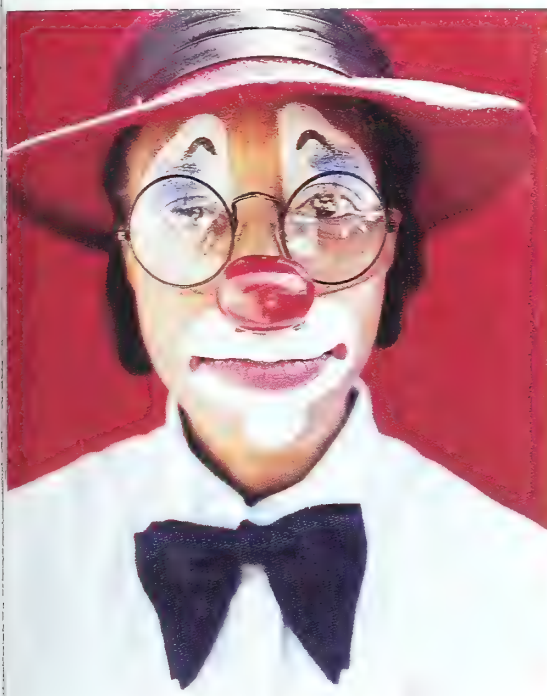
[salutation]

## MON AMOUR

*The following salutations are taken from the letters of Simone de Beauvoir to Nelson Algren. Algren, author of The Man with the Golden Arm and A Walk on the Wild Side, met de Beauvoir, the French novelist and philosopher, in Chicago in 1947. Their affair lasted until 1951, though they continued to correspond until 1964, when de Beauvoir published "The Question of Fidelity," an article about the affair, in Harper's Magazine. The letters, originally written in English, are collected at Ohio State University. They were published in French in February by Gallimard.*

Nelson, my love  
Sweetest darling you  
Dearest nice dear you  
My beloved nice man, my nice beloved  
— husband, my own Nelson—  
My own local pretty man—  
My precious beloved Chicago man  
Dearest flower of Istanbul  
Dearest man with the golden arm  
My man with the golden brain  
Dearest lazy you  
Dearest naughty you  
My poor dearest American dilemma—  
Dearest lily crazy pimp of mine  
My dearest too busy faraway wonderman  
My beloved crocodile  
Dearest male brute  
Sweetest you, sweetest of all monsters in the  
— world  
My dearest not too repellent you—  
Darling disgustingly greedy you  
Darling poor old ugly rejected you  
Dearest sitting and brooding local beast—  
My dearest meanest than ever you  
My own dearest pugish pig  
You dirty pissy brained camel hearted pack  
— of mud  
Dearest mutt king of nothing





Two photographs of UniverSOUL Big Top Circus clowns Danise Payne and Russell Lark Brown were taken by Erin Patrice O'Brien. They appeared in the August issue of *Vibe*. The all-black circus is currently on its fourth national tour.

But the actual story is quite a bit messier, and our ignorance of it is largely the product of an odd tendency on both the left and the right to ignore the particulars of American business history. American capitalism was hardly the unchanging and soulless machine imagined by countercultural leaders; it was as dynamic a force in its own way as the revolutionary youth movements, undertaking dramatic transformations in both the way it operated and the way it imagined itself. What we know about business is this: From the beginning of the counterculture down to the present, business dogged it with a commercial replica that seemed to ape its every move for the titillation of the TV-watching millions and the nation's corporate sponsors.

But to understand corporate behavior in the Sixties as co-optation—in which countercultural values and symbols were mimicked and mass-produced by corporate America in order to cash in on a particular demographic and subvert the great threat that the “real” counterculture represented—is to miss an important point. In fact, the counterculture, instead of being the singular catalyst for change that it is assumed to be, was only one manifestation of a larger cultural shift that was already being felt in the most advanced reaches of the American corporate world. Many people in American

business, particularly in advertising, also deplored conformity, distrusted routine, and encouraged resistance to established power. They imagined the counterculture not as an enemy to be undermined or a threat to consumer culture but as a hopeful sign, a symbolic ally in their own struggles against the mountains of deadweight procedure and hierarchy that had accumulated over the years. They welcomed the youth-led cultural revolution, because they perceived in it a comrade in their own struggles to revitalize American business and the consumer order generally.

**T**ake the case of Bill Bernbach, the towering figure of the 1960s advertising world and the guiding spirit of the Doyle Dane Bernbach agency. Bernbach founded his agency in 1949, eight years before Mailer's essay appeared, and dedicated it to the principle that all the old rules of scientific advertising henceforth were to be scrupulously ignored. Bernbach was the first adman to embrace the mass-society critique, to appeal directly to the powerful but hitherto unmentionable public fears of conformity, of manipulation, fraud, and powerlessness, and to sell products by so doing. By inventing anti-advertising (most memorably in the landmark 1959 Volkswagen campaign, which held up the “bug” as an anti-car, the



—in a time (and of consumer rebellion), he [artless] public mistrust of consumerism—perhaps the most powerful cultural tendency of the age—to consumerism itself. As an idologue of disorder, tirelessly repeating his mantra that advertising was equivalent to modern art, Bernbach was the enemy of technocracy long before the counterculture raised its own voice in protest of conformity and the Organization Man.

By the mid-1960s the anti-principles of creativity had become rule-book stuff in their own right. In a 1966 handbook for copywriters, a Young & Rubicam creative leader instructed readers that “the first rule for copywriters is to be suspicious of rules.” The primary goal of unleashing all of this creativity

was not to overthrow capitalism, of course, but to jump-start the engine of change—the “permanent revolution”—that drove the consumer culture. Talk of creativity and perpetual innovation became ubiquitous in the industry literature, and the imagery of “youth” began to serve as a marketing symbol, an abstraction of commercial speech, a consuming vision for Americans of all ages, not simply the somewhat narrow demographic of consumers between ages eighteen and thirty.

Admen settled on the counterculture as the signifier of choice for hip consumerism partially because they believed, contrary to the assertions of countercultural theorists, that the hip young were good potential consumers. More importantly, though, and despite the counterculture’s suspicion of advertising and material accumulation, admen used its external markings to represent new consumer values that the industry itself had already internalized. Caught up in the frenzy of advertising’s creative revolution, admen looked at the counterculture and saw . . . themselves. They also saw a perfect model for consumer subjectivity, intelligent and at war with the conformist past, and a cultural machine for turning disgust with consumerism into the fuel by which consumerism might be accelerated. Hip capitalism wasn’t something on the fringes of enterprise, an occasional hippie entrepreneur selling posters or drug paraphernalia. Nor was it purely a demographic maneuver, just a different spin to sell products to a different group. What happened in the Sixties is that hip became central to the way capitalism understood itself and explained itself to the public.

**T**oday, the legacy of the consumer revolution of the 1960s is unmistakable. There are few things more beloved of our mass media than the figure of the cultural rebel, the defiant individualist resisting the mandates of civilization. Commercial fantasies of rebellion, liberation, and outright “revolution” against the stultifying demands of mass society are commonplace almost to the point of invisibility in advertising, movies, and television programming. Nike shoes are sold to the accompaniment of words delivered by William S. Burroughs and songs by the Beatles, Iggy Pop, and Gil Scott-Heron (“the revolution will not be televised”); peace symbols decorate a line of cigarettes manufactured by R. J. Reynolds and the walls and windows of Starbucks coffee shops worldwide; and the products of Apple, IBM, and Microsoft are touted as devices of liberation. The music industry continues to rejuvenate itself with the periodic discovery of new and ever more sub-

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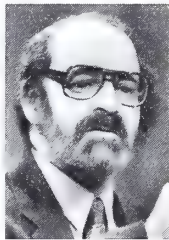
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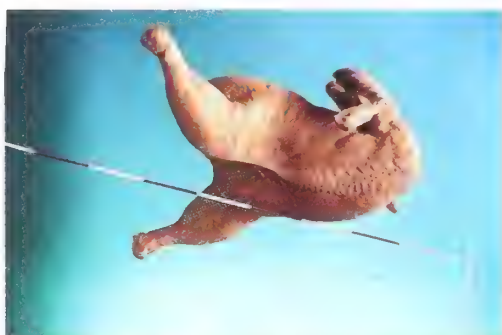
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reverse media movements, and our televised marketplace is a twenty-four-hour showplace of transgression and inversion of values, of humiliated patriarchs and shocked puritans, of screaming guitars and concupiscent youth.

[Chickens]

## POULTRY IN MOTION



The above photographs of plucked chickens are part of *Pollos Olímpicos* ("Olympic Chickens"), a series by Carolina Werrle. They appeared in the Spring issue of *Poliester*, an art journal published in Mexico City, and will play this fall at the Camargo Vilas Gallery in New York. See lives in *Contemporary* 10/2/97.

However we may rankle under the bureaucratized monotony of our productive lives, in our consuming lives we are no longer merely affluent, we are *rebels*.

As it turned out, the mass-society critique of the 1950s was one with which American capitalism was singularly well prepared to deal—which is why it sometimes seems that we will never be rid of it. Hip and square are now permanently locked together, like the images of Coke and Pepsi, in a self-perpetuating pageant of workplace deference and advertising outrage. Our celebrities are not just glamorous, they are insurrectionaries; our police and soldiers are not just good guys, they break the rules for a higher purpose. And through them and our imagined participation in whatever is the latest permutation of the rebel Pepsi Generation, we have not solved the problems of mass society but defused them. Impervious to criticism of any kind, and virtually without historical memory, hip has become the public philosophy of the age of flexible accumulation.

[Investment Tips]

## MODERN ART: THE BOTTOM LINE

From the 1997 edition of *Art Market Guide*, by Richard Polsky, published by the Marlet Press in San Francisco. In the guidebook, Polsky assesses the "market value and pricing trends" of the works of forty contemporary American artists, and then advises collectors to either "buy," "sell," or "hold" them.

**I**n the 1980s, Keith Haring's crawling babies and radiant barking dogs captured the imagination of the media. This led to wide exposure and high-profile opportunities. Haring scored big when he was commissioned to design a huge mural for the famous dance club the Palladium, and deals to design Swatches and sweatshirts soon followed. Haring should have stuck with these. Despite the artist's apparently sincere convictions, his work isn't serious art.

This is important to know, especially since Haring sells for a lot of money. How can the current market justify \$50,000–\$75,000 for a painting on tarpaulin, \$10,000–\$25,000 for a *sumi* ink drawing, or \$7,500–\$15,000 for felt-tip pen on a large vase? In the long run, it can't. Buy Haring if you genuinely love the



work, but don't fool yourself into thinking you're making a wise investment.

♦

Alexander Calder is one of the three greatest sculptors of the century—along with Brancusi and Henry Moore—and his importance is beyond dispute. He's also one of the most conservative blue-chip artists you can buy. Purchase Calder if you want a work that will retain its approximate value, but not if you're looking for substantial appreciation. Calder is the art-world equivalent of having your money in CDs. He gives you financial peace of mind.

♦

Although David Hockney has few peers, it feels like he's been in decline since the late 1970s. It helps to think of him like Paul McCartney. On his own, McCartney has never approached the genius of his years with the Beatles. As for Hockney, we may not like what he's doing now as much as we liked his "Beatles period," but if he continues along this current path—experimenting, keeping it light, enjoying himself—we should accept it. Still, that doesn't mean we have to buy it.

When it comes to Hockney, go with the sure thing: his early work. Hockney's colored-pencil drawings are the most undervalued aspect of his production.

♦

Jeff Koons burst onto the scene in the 1980s with basketballs floating in aquariums, Plexiglas-encased vacuum cleaners, and his unforgettable inflatable bunny cast in shiny stainless steel. From there it was all downhill. The work disintegrated first into statues of Michael Jackson and later into an embarrassing series of images of the artist and his wife "doing it" in various unsavory positions.

The irony is that, up until the most recent sale, the work has done well at auction. But Koons's amazing run has come to an end. The work has begun to look like the kitsch it once parodied. There is nothing even thought-provoking, let alone aesthetically sublime, about a life-size Disneyesque bear talking to a goofy-looking London bobby.

Critics argue that Koons provokes, and thus that there's "something there." What's "there" is a collector shelling out \$100,000–\$150,000 at auction for a work that will eventually be sold for ten cents on the dollar at Sotheby's Arcade and Christie's East, where the sale of minor works by has-been artists takes place.

There's an expression that stockbrokers use: "Never catch a knife when it's falling." This knife is still falling.

[Vision]

## TRYING FOR THE KINGDOM

*From an August 26 commentary by Peter Trachtenberg on National Public Radio's All Things Considered. Trachtenberg is the author of a memoir, 7 Tattoos, published by Crown.*

**F**or a long time, I used heroin religiously. I don't just mean regularly. I used to believe that the heroin high was the closest a living person could ever get to heaven; it provided that same gliding, disembodied bliss, that same magnanimous indifference to corporeal needs, for food or for bowel movements. Every time I got off, I felt a ping of subconscious recognition, as if that chastely voluptuous junk high were unearthing all my buried memories of hymns and sermons and Sunday-school lessons.

One night during this period, I was on the Lower East Side, dope sick and trying to cop. It was late fall—tuberculosis weather. No one was holding anywhere, and I was finally reduced to giving \$30 to some lowlife I barely knew who said he could get me something. I didn't believe him, but I sat down to wait on a bench in the Pitt Street park. It was a pathetic excuse for a bench. The slats were splintered, the backrest a memory. I looked down and there, where grass should have been growing, I saw broken syringes and torn glassine envelopes. The reason I happened to be looking down is that I'd begun to double over with withdrawal cramps. And, right on schedule, I started vomiting in an acrid stream between my feet.

Oddly enough, none of this bothered me. Suddenly, I was serenely aware that I was exactly where I belonged. I wasn't trying to accomplish anything. I wasn't pretending to be anybody or trying to convince anyone that I had anything to offer: no skills, no money, no power, no sex, no wit, no love—none of the currencies I'd used to pay for my leasehold on Earth. At that moment I realized that my entire life had been the life of a guppy—churning its tiny fins to stay afloat, darting ceaselessly to stay out of the jaws of sharks. And what a relief, what an incredible relief it was, finally, to sink to the bottom.

Somehow, when I knew that my bogus connection wouldn't be coming back, I managed to get up from the bench and wander deep into the projects along the river. Soon I came across a long line of my fellow junkies filing into a ruined warehouse. I figured I'd hit the jackpot, so I walked to the end of the line and I asked the guy ahead of me, "What have they got?"





Everybody Wants the Same Thing, by New York City artist Attila Richard Lukacs. Lukacs's work is currently on display at the Phyllis Kind Gallery in New York City.

"It's God, man."

"You don't say? Is it decent?" I figured he was talking about a brand name, like Suicide or Poison. God—it was the work of a marketing genius.

But inside the warehouse, instead of great dope, there were rows of pews, and every pew was filled with junkies. There were sniffing twelve-year-old boys and stooped veterans with hands like waterlogged sponges. Fashion models with the faces of drowsy angels who'd been chauffeured down in limousines from the East 60s. There were emaciated, crook-backed junkies who'd crawled from beneath packing crates in Tompkins Square Park, whose bodies were gruesome exempla of their disease—every vein collapsed, every limb cratered, eyes jaundiced, teeth gone rotten; the kind of junkies you always look at and think, at least I'm not *that* bad. And they were all praying. They prayed to statues lined up at the front of the room, amid a sea of burning candles: Saint Sebastian—those arrows were a dead giveaway; next to him, Dymphna, the patroness of nervous disorders and sexual madness. There was Dominic Savio, guardian of choirboys and juvenile delinquents. Also, naturally, Saint Jude, the last hope of lost causes.

People prayed out loud, one at a time, while the rest of the congregation called out a response.

"Oh Lord, hear my prayer. May the man be

carrying good dope tonight and not dummy."

"Amen."

"May his junk be white as sugar and strong as lye."

"Amen."

"May his coke make me speak with the tongues of parrots."

"Amen."

"Protect me from AIDS, Lord."

"Amen."

"Tonight, Lord, let me find a good vein."

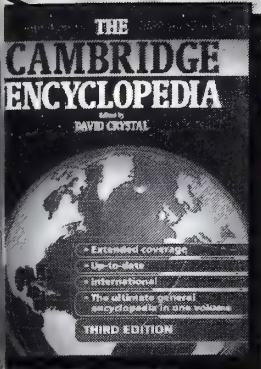
"Amen."

"And let me hit it the first time."

"Amen."

I have to say I don't know if any of this really happened. I might have been hallucinating, though hallucinations aren't a common symptom of heroin withdrawal. I wish I could say that I prayed in that warehouse to get straight and was cured from that night forward. It would make a great story. But I wasn't big on praying then. I went on using for another year or so, anything I could melt down in a spoon and draw up through a syringe. And then one day I had a change of heart. Or maybe I should say, my heart was changed for me, since it took place against my will. Kicking and sniveling, I was yanked back into the world of hunger. Where I still remain. ■





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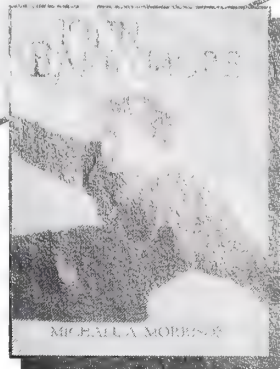
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# INTRIGUES

## *Nine Stories by* *Anton Chekhov*

Translated by Peter Constantine

IN HIS EARLY TWENTIES IN MOSCOW, ANTON CHEKHOV (1860–1904) was a cutup, a carouser, a medical student, his family's breadwinner, and a writer who had recently received the death sentence of tuberculosis. Literally feverish, he also became delirious to write—composing, among many other stories, these exuberant, dark, and presciently modern tales, which have never before been published in English.

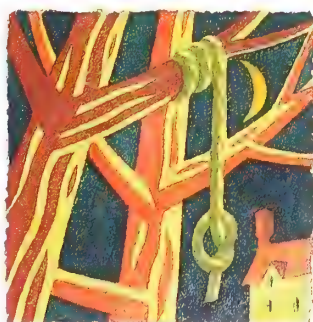
### HOW I CAME TO BE LAWFULLY WED

**A**fter we had finished the punch, our parents murmured a few words to each other and left us alone. "Go ahead!" my father whispered to me on his way out. "Say the words!"

"But how can I declare my love," I whispered back, "if I don't love her?"

"No one's asking what you want to do, you idiot!"

My father gave me an angry stare and left the garden pavilion. Then, after everyone had gone,



a woman's hand reached in the half-open door and snatched the candle from the table. We sat in the dark.

"Well, there's no escaping now!" I thought, and with a discreet cough I said briskly: "I see that circumstances favor me, Zoë Andreyevna! At last we are alone, and darkness comes to my aid, for it covers the shame written on my face ... the shame pouring from the

feelings with which my soul is ablaze."

Suddenly I stopped. I could hear Zoë Andreyevna's heart beating and her teeth chatter-

*Peter Constantine is an Austrian poet and Japanologist who has translated literature into English from German, Spanish, Modern Greek, and Afrikaans. He lives in New York City.*



ing. Her whole organism was trembling—I could hear and feel it from the way the bench was shaking. The poor girl didn't love me. She hated me, the way a dog hates the stick that beats it. She despised me, you could say, as only an idiot can. Suddenly I felt like an orangutan, ugly—even though I'm covered in medals and honors—no better than a beast, fat-faced, pimply, covered with stubble; alcohol and a perpetual cold have made my nose red and bloated! A bear has more grace than I do. And don't even mention my intellectual qualities! With her, with Zoë, I had pulled an immoral trick before she became my bride. I stopped in mid-sentence, because suddenly I felt deeply sorry for her.

"Let us go out into the garden," I said. "It's stifling in here."

We went out and walked down the garden path. Our parents, who had been listening by the door, had managed to scamper into the bushes just before we appeared. Moonbeams played on Zoë's face. Idiot though I was, I thought I could read in that face all the sweet pain of bondage. I sighed and continued: "The nightingale sings for its sweetheart . . . and I, all alone in this world, who can I sing to?"

Zoë blushed and lowered her eyes. She was acting to perfection the role she was expected to play. We sat on a bench by the stream, beyond which a church glimmered white. Behind the church towered Count Kuldarov's mansion, in which his clerk lived—Bolnitsin, the man Zoë loved. As she sat down on the bench she fixed her gaze on the mansion. My heart sank and shriveled with pity. My God, my God! May heaven smile on our parents . . . but they should be sent down to hell, for a week at least!

"All my happiness rests on a single person," I continued. "I feel deeply for that person . . . her perfume . . . I love her, and should she not return my love, then I am lost . . . dead . . . You are that person. Can you love me? Huh? Could you love me?"

"I love you," she whispered.

I must confess I almost died. I had thought she would dig in her heels, since she was deeply in love with someone else. I had relied on her passion for the other man, but things turned out quite differently. She wasn't strong enough to swim against the tide!

"I love you," she repeated, and burst into tears.

"But, no, that can't be!" I shouted, not knowing what I was saying, my whole body shaking. "How is it possible? Zoë Andreyevna—do not believe a word of what I said! My

God, do not believe a word! May I roast in hell if I am in love with you! And you do not love me! This is all nonsense!"

I jumped up from the bench.

"We needn't go through with this! This is a farce! They are forcing us to marry for money, Zoë. What love is there between us? I would rather have a millstone around my neck than marry you! It's as simple as that! Damn! What right do they have to do this to us? What do they think we are? Serfs? Dogs? We won't get married! Damn them, the bastards! We've danced to their tune long enough already! I'm going to them right this minute to tell them that I won't marry you—it's as simple as that!"

Zoë suddenly stopped crying; her tears instantly dried up.

"I'm going to tell them right now!" I continued. "And you tell them, too. Tell them that you don't love me—that it's Bolnitsin you love. And I'll be the first to shake Bolnitsin's hand. I'm fully aware of how deeply in love with him you are!"

Zoë smiled happily and came up to me.

"And you're in love with someone else too, aren't you?" she said, rubbing her hands together. "You're in love with Mademoiselle De Beux!"

"Yes," I said, "Mademoiselle De Beux. She's not Russian Orthodox and she's not rich, but I love her for her mind and her edifying qualities. My parents can send me to hell, but I will marry her! I love her, I think I love her even more than I love life itself! I cannot live without her! If I can't marry her, then I no longer wish to live! I'm going right this minute . . . let's both go and tell these fools . . . oh, thank you, my dearest . . . you have comforted me no end!"

My soul was flooded with happiness, and I thanked Zoë again and again, and she thanked me. And both of us, overjoyed, thankful, kissed each other's hands, commending each other on our high-mindedness. I kissed her hands; she kissed my forehead, the stubble of my beard. It seems that forgetting all etiquette I even hugged her! And let me tell you, this declaration of non-love was sweeter than any declaration of love could be! Joyful, rosy, trembling all over, we rushed to the house to tell our parents of our decision. As we crossed the garden we cheered each other on.

"So let them shout at us!" I said. "They can beat us, even throw us out, at least we'll be happy!"

We entered the house, and there, by the door, our parents were waiting. They took one look at us, saw how happy we were, and immediately called the butler. He brought in the champagne.



I started protesting, waving my arms, stamping my feet . . . Zoë began crying, shrieking . . . there was a tremendous uproar, a rumpus, and we didn't get to drink the champagne.

But they married us anyway.

Today is our silver wedding anniversary. We have lived together for a quarter of a century.

Initially it was terrible. I swore at her, beat her, and then out of regret began loving her. This regret brought with it children . . . and then . . . well . . . we just got used to each other. This very moment my darling Zoë is standing right behind me. Laying her hands on my shoulders, she kisses my bald spot. ☺

## A HYPNOTIC SEANCE

**T**he large hall was lit with torches and bursting with people. In the center was the hypnotist. Despite his scrawny, unprepossessing physique, he shone, glowed, and sparkled. People smiled, applauded, obeyed his every order; everyone turned pale in his presence.

He literally performed miracles. Some people he hypnotized, some he paralyzed, others he had balancing on chairs by their necks and heels; he tied a thin, tall journalist into a knot. In a word, he did whatever he pleased. He had an especially strong effect on the ladies. One glance from him and they dropped like flies. Oh, women's nerves! If it weren't for these nerves how boring life would be!

Having exercised his demonic art on everyone else, the hypnotist came over to me.

"You seem to be of a suggestive nature," he said. "You are so nervous, so overwrought. Wouldn't you like to take a nap?"

Why not? With pleasure, my good man, let's try. I sat down on a chair in the middle of the hall. The hypnotist sat on another chair facing me, took hold of my hands, and gazed into my eyes with his terrifying snakelike glare.

The audience surrounded us.

"Shh! Please, ladies and gentlemen! Shh . . . quiet!"

Silence falls. He and I sit staring at each other. A minute passes, two . . . Shivers run down my spine, my heart pounds, but I'm not in the least tired!

We keep sitting there. Five minutes pass, seven minutes . . .

"He's not giving in!" somebody shouted. "Bravo! Good man!"



We sit, we stare. I'm not tired, not even drowsy. A local council session would have put me to sleep long ago. The audience starts whispering and sniggering. The hypnotist is distracted and his eyes flicker. Poor man! Nobody likes losing! Save him, O spirits! Come to my eyelids, O Morpheus!

"He's not giving in!" the same voice shouted. "That's enough! Let it be! I said right away that these are nothing but conjuring tricks!"

Then, just as I heard my friend's voice in the crowd and moved to get up, my hand felt a strange object in its palm. My sense of touch responding, I realized that the object was a piece of paper. My father was a doctor, and doctors can sniff out a banknote at a touch. According to Darwin's theory, I must have inherited this superb faculty, along with many other talents, from my father. The bill, I could tell, was a five-ruble note, so I immediately nodded off.

"Bravo! Bravo!"

The doctors present in the hall rushed up, walked around me, prodded me, and proclaimed: "Hmm, yes, he's asleep . . ."

The hypnotist, pleased at his success, waved his hands over my head, and I, in a trance, began walking about the room.

"Tetanize his arm!" someone suggested.

"Yes, can you do that? Can you paralyze his arm?"

The hypnotist (not a timid man!) pulled at my right arm and started doing his machinations over it: rubbing it, blowing on it, slapping it. But my arm wouldn't obey. It hung there dangling and refused to become rigid.

"He's not tetanized! Wake him up! This is dangerous! He's a sensitive, high-strung boy!"

Suddenly my other palm, the left one, felt a five-ruble note brush against it. A reflex shot



from my left hand to my right, and miraculous  
ly my arm went rigid.

"Bravo! Look how rigid and cold his hands! Like a corpse!"

"We have full anesthesia, the lowering of bodily temperature, and weakening of the pulse," the hypnotist announced.

The doctors checked my wrist.

"Yes, his pulse is weak," one of them remarked.

"We have complete rigidity. His temperature is much lower..."

"How do you explain it?" one of the ladies asked.

A doctor shrugged his shoulders portentously, sighed, and said: "All we can give you is the facts! Rational explanations? Alas, there are none!"

You have the facts, and I have two fivers in my pocket, and all thanks to hypnotism—I don't need any rational explanations! Poor hypnotist! It was just your luck to tangle with a viper like me!

P.S.: Damn, what a mess!

It was only afterwards that I realized it wasn't

the hypnotist but my boss, Peter Fyodorovitch, who slipped me the five-ruble bills.

"I did it to test your honesty," he told me. Damn.

"This is terrible," Peter Fyodorovitch said. "Disgraceful . . . I would never have expected this from you!"

"But Sir, I have children! A wife . . . a mother . . . and things are so expensive nowadays!"

"This is disgusting! And you want to publish your own newspaper, you who cry at sentimental dinner speeches. A disgrace! I thought you were an honest man, and it turns out that you . . . you are worse than . . . *haben Sie gewesen!*"

So I had to return the two fivers. What else could I do? One's reputation is, after all, more precious than money.

"It's not you I'm angry at," my boss said. "You can go to hell for all I care—that's what you're like! But how could *she* have fallen into the same trap! She, of all people! She who is so gentle, so innocent, all rice pudding! She was tempted by money too! She 'fell asleep' too!"

By "she," my boss was referring to his wife, Matryona Nikolayevna. ☹

## ON THE TRAIN

The post train races full speed from the Happy-Trach-Tararach station to the Run-for-Your-Life station. The locomotive whistles, hisses, puffs, snorts; the cars shake, and their uncoiled wheels howl like wolves and screech like owls! Darkness is over the skies, over the earth, and in the cars. "Something-will-happen, something-will-happen," the wagons hammer, rattling with age. "Ohohohoho!" the locomotive joins in. Pickpockets and cold drafts sweep through the wagons. Terrible! I stick my head out the window and look aimlessly into the endless expanse. All the lights are green, but somewhere down the line I'm sure all hell will break loose. The signal disk and the station lights are not yet visible. Darkness, anguish, thoughts of death, memories of childhood,



pocket is empty, but still it's horrifying. I turn around. A stranger is standing next to me. He is wearing a straw hat and a dark gray shirt.

"Can I help you?" I ask him, patting my hands over my pockets.

"No, I'm just looking out the window!" he answers, pulling back his hand and leaning

against my back.

There is a powerful, earsplitting whistle. The train slows and slows, and finally it stops. I get out of the car and walk over to the station buffet for a drink to bolster my courage. The buffet is bustling with passengers and train workers.

"A vodka, sweet and easy!" the thickset chief conductor says, turning to a fat gentleman. The fat gentleman wants to say something but can't: his year-old sandwich is stuck in his throat.

"Poli-i-i-ce! Poli-i-i-ce!" someone outside on the platform is shouting, as in primordial times, before the Deluge, hungry mastodons, ichthyosaurs, and plesiosaurs would have bel-

"I have sinned!" I whisper, "I have sinned!"

I feel a hand slip into my back pocket. The



lowed. I go to see what's happening. A man with a cockade on his hat is standing outside one of the first-class cars pointing to his feet. Someone swiped the poor man's shoes and socks while he was sleeping.

"What am I going to do?" he shouts. "I have to go all the way to Revel! Can you believe this?"

A policeman, standing in front of him, informs him, "It's against the rules to shout here." I climb back into my car, No. 224. It's exactly as it was: dark, the sound of snoring, tobacco and soot in the air—the smell of Mother Russia. A red-haired inspector traveling to Kiev from Ryazan is snoring next to me . . . a few feet away from him a pretty girl is dozing . . . a peasant in a straw hat snorts, puffs, changes position, and doesn't know where to put his long legs . . . in the corner someone is munching, and loudly smacking his lips. Under the benches people lie in deep sleep. The door creaks. Two wrinkly little old women come hobbling in with bundles on their backs . . .

"Here! Let's sit here!" one of them says. "Ooh, it's dark! Temptations from Below! Oops, I stepped on someone! . . . but where is Pakhom?"

"Pakhom? Oh, good gracious! Where has he got to now! Oh, good gracious!"

The little old woman bustles about, opens the window, and looks up and down the platform.

"Pa-a-a-khom!" she brays. "Where are you? Pakhom! We're over here!"

"I have a pro-o-o-blem!" a voice calls from outside. "They won't let me on!"

"They won't let you on? Cowshit! No one can stop you, you have a real ticket!"

"They've stopped selling tickets! The ticket office is closed!"

Someone leads a horse up the platform. There is snorting; hooves clatter.

"Get back!" the policeman shouts. "Get off immediately! Nothing but trouble!"

"Petrovna!" Pakhom moans.

Petrovna drops her bundle, takes hold of a large tin teapot and quickly runs out of the car. The second bell rings. A little conductor with a black mustache comes in.

"You're going to have to get a ticket," he whispers to the old man sitting opposite me. "The controller just got on!"

"Really! Oh . . . That's bad! . . . What, the Prince himself?"

"The Prince? Ha, you could beat him with a stick, he'd never come to do an inspection himself."

"So, who is it? The one with the beard?"

"Yes, him."

"Well, if it's him, that's fine. He's a good man!"

"It's up to you."

"Are there many ride-hoppers today?"

"At least forty."

"I say, good for them! Fast workers!"

My heart constricts. I'm a ride-hopper, too. I always hop rides. On the railroads the ride-hoppers are those passengers who prefer to "inconvenience" conductors with money rather than pay the cashier at the station. Being a ride-hopper is great, dear reader. The unwritten rule is that ride-hoppers get a 75 percent discount. Furthermore, they don't have to line up at ticket windows or take their ticket out of their pocket every few minutes, and the conductor is much more courteous to them . . . in a nutshell, it's the best way to travel!

"What's the point of paying whatever, whenever?" the old man mumbles. "Never! I always pay the conductor directly! The conductor needs money more than the railroad does!"

The third bell rings.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" the little old woman whines. "Where on earth is Petrovna? The third bell already! O Trials and Tribulations! We've lost her! We've lost her, poor dear! And her things are still here . . . what am I going to do with her things, with her bag! Heavens above, we've lost her."

The little old woman thinks for a moment.

"If she can't get on, she'll need it!" she says and throws Petrovna's bag out the window.

The train sets off for Khaldeyevo, which according to my Frum tourist guide is no more than a common grave. The controller and the chief conductor enter, carrying candles.

"Ti-i-i-ckets," the chief conductor shouts.

The controller turns to me and the old man: "Your tickets!"

We shrink back, stoop over, rummage through our pockets, and then stare at the chief conductor, who winks at us.

"Get their tickets!" the controller says to the conductor and marches on. We are saved.

"Tickets! You! Show me your ticket!" The chief conductor nudges a sleeping young man. The young man wakes up and pulls the yellow ticket out of his hat.

"Where're you going?" the controller asks, twirling the ticket in his fingers. "This isn't where *we're* going!"

"You blockhead, this isn't where *we're* going!" the chief conductor chimes in. "You got on the wrong train, you idiot! You're supposed to be heading for Zhivoderevo, and we're heading for Khaldeyevo! Here's your ticket back! You should keep your eyes open!"

The young man blinks, looks dully at the smiling crowd, and starts rubbing his eyes.

"Don't cry!" people tell him. "You'd better ask



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peaches in spring. It's  
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changed, it's the  
packaging.

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in midwinter.

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them to help you. A big lot like you, probably even married with children, howling like that!"

"Ti-i-i-ckets!" the chief conductor shouts at a farmer with a top hat.

"What?"

"Your ticket! Get a move on!"

"A ticket? You need it?"

"Your ticket!"

"I see . . . No, definitely, why not if you need it!" The farmer with the top hat reaches into his vest, quickly pulls out a greasy piece of paper, and hands it over to the controller.

"What are you giving me here? This is your passport! I want to see your ticket!"

"This is all I have!" the farmer answers, visibly shaken.

"How can you travel when you don't have a ticket?"

"But I've paid."

"What do you mean you paid? Whom did you pay?"

"The c-con-conductor."

"Which conductor?"

"How the devil am I supposed to know which c-con-conductor? Some conductor, it's as simple as that . . . You don't need a ticket, he said, you can travel without one . . . so I didn't get a ticket."

"Well, we'll discuss this further at the station. Madam, your ticket!"

The door creaks, opens, and to everyone's surprise Petrovna enters.

"Oh Lord, what a hard time I had finding my compartment . . . how's one supposed to tell them apart, they all look the same . . . And they didn't let Pakhom get on, the snakes . . . Where's my bag?"

"Oh! . . . Temptations from Below! . . . I threw it out the window for you. I thought we'd left you behind!"

"You threw it where?"

"Out the window. How was I to know?"

"Oh, thank you very much! Who told you to do that, you old hag! May the Lord forgive me! What am I going to do? Why didn't you throw your own bag out, you bitch! It's your ugly mug you should have thrown out the window! Ohh! May both your eyes fall out!"

"You'll have to send a telegram from the next station!" the laughing crowd suggests.

Petrovna starts wailing loudly and spouting profanities. Her friend, also crying, is clutching her bag. The conductor comes in.

"Whose things are these?" he shouts, holding up Petrovna's bag.

"Pret-t-t-y!" the old man sitting opposite whispers to me, nodding his head at the pretty girl. "Mmm . . . pret-t-y . . . pity I don't have any chlo-

roform on me! One whiff and she'd be out! Then I could kiss her for all I'm worth!"

The man in the straw hat stirs uncomfortably and in a loud voice curses his long legs.

"Scientists," he mumbles. "Scientists . . . you can't fight the nature of things . . . scientists! Ha! How come they haven't come up with something so we can screw our legs on and off at will?"

"It's got nothing to do with me . . . Speak to the public prosecutor!" the inspector sitting next to me shouts.

In the far corner two high-school boys, a noncommissioned officer, and a blue-eyed young man are huddled together playing a game of cards by the light of their cigarettes.

A tall lady is sitting haughtily to my right. She reeks of powder and patchouli.

"Oh, how absolutely divine it is to be *en route*," some goose is whispering into her ear, her voice sugary . . . nauseatingly sugary . . . Frenchifying her g's, n's, and r's. "One's *rapprochement* is never as quick and as charming as it is when one is *en route*. Oh, how I do love being *en route*!"

A kiss . . . another . . . what the hell is going on?

The pretty girl wakes up, looks around, and unconsciously rests her head against the man sitting next to her, the devotee of Justice . . . but the idiot is asleep.

The train stops. A halt. "The train will be stopping for two minutes!" a hoarse bass voice mutters outside the railroad car. Two minutes pass, two more . . . Five minutes pass, ten, twenty, and the train is still standing. What the hell's going on! I get off the train and make my way to the locomotive.

"Ivan Matevitch! Get a move on! Damn!" the chief conductor shouts from the locomotive.

The engine driver crawls out from under the locomotive, red, wet, a piece of soot sticking to his nose . . .

"Damn you! Damn you!" he shouts up at the chief conductor. "Get off my back! Are you blind? Can't you see what's going on? God! Ahh . . . I wish you'd all go to hell! This is supposed to be a locomotive? This is no locomotive, it's a pile of junk! I'm not traveling any further on this!"

"What're we going to do?"

"You can do whatever you like! How about getting another locomotive—I refuse to travel on this one! Don't you understand?"

The driver's helpers run around the broken-down engine, banging, shouting . . . the station chief in a red cap tells Jewish jokes to his assistant . . . it starts to rain . . . I head back to my railroad car . . . the stranger in the straw hat and the dark gray shirt rushes by . . . he's carrying a suitcase. God . . . it's my suitcase! ☹



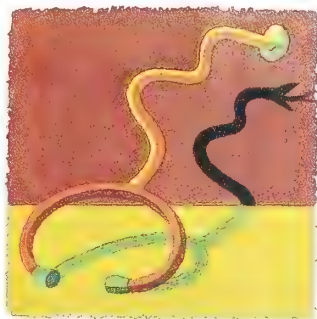
## INTRIGUES

a) Election of new chairman of the Association.

b) Discussion of the October 2nd incident.

c) Synopsis of the activities of member Dr. M. H. von Bronn.

d) Routine matters concerning the Association.



Doctor Shelestov, the culprit in the October 2nd incident, is getting ready to go to the meeting. He has been standing for a long time in front of the mirror, trying to give his face a languid look. If he were to turn up at the meeting with a face that looked concerned, tense, red, or slightly pale, then his enemies would deduce that he was affected by their intrigues. If his face were cold, impassive, as if he had had a good night's sleep, the kind of face that people have who are untouched by the toils and strife of life, then all his enemies would secretly be overcome with respect and think:

His proud rebellious head doth rise higher  
Than the giddy heights of Napoléon's  
monument.

Like a person who has little interest in intrigues and squabbles, he would arrive at the meeting later than all the others. He would enter the room quietly, languidly pass his hand through his hair, and without looking at a single person take a seat at the very end of the table. Assuming the pose of the bored listener, he would suppress a yawn, pick up a newspaper, and start reading. Everyone would be talking, arguing, boiling over, calling each other to order—but he would remain silent, reading his newspaper. Finally, as his name was repeated more and more often and the burning question turned white hot, he would lift his bored, weary eyes and say to his colleagues, reluctantly: "You are forcing me to speak . . . Gentlemen, I have not prepared a speech, so please bear with me—my words can not do this scandal justice. I shall begin *ab ovo*. At the last meeting some of our esteemed colleagues asserted that I do not conduct myself in an appropriate manner during medical consultations, and consequently they called

me to account. Being of the opinion that I need not proffer justifications, and that the accusations are nothing but unscrupulous ploys, I asked that my name be removed from the membership roster of the Association and subsequently resigned. Now, however, that a whole series of

new accusations are being leveled against me I find, to my great regret, that I am forced to offer an explanation after all. With your permission, I shall explain."

At this point, carelessly twirling a pencil or a chain, he would say that yes, in actual fact it was true that during consultations he had sometimes been known to raise his voice and attack colleagues, regardless of who was present. It was also true that once, during a consultation, in the presence of doctors and family members, he had asked the patient: "Who was the idiot who prescribed opium for you?" Rare was a consultation without incident . . . But why was this? The answer was simple! In these consultations he, Shelestov, was saddled with colleagues whose knowledge left much to be desired. There were thirty-two doctors in town, most of whom knew less than a first-year medical student. One didn't have to look far for examples. Needless to say, *nomina sunt odiosa*—one does not wish to name names—but as they were among themselves at the meeting, and he did not want to appear a scandalmonger, names would be mentioned. For instance, everyone was aware that our esteemed colleague von Bronn pierced the esophagus of Madam Seryozhkina, the official's wife, when he inserted a probe.

At that point von Bronn would jump up, wring his hands, and cry out: "My dear colleague, you were the one who stabbed her, not I! I'll prove it!"

Shelestov would ignore him and continue: "Furthermore, as everyone is aware, our esteemed colleague Zhila mistook the actress Semiramidina's floating kidney for an abscess and undertook a probing puncture. The immediate result was *exitus letalis*—lethal consequences! Our esteemed friend Besstrunko, instead of removing the nail from the big toe of a left foot, removed the



malice not to do the right, but I am also pressed to do all the evil in which our esteemed colleague Terkhavyantz catheterized the soldier Ivanov's eustachian tubes with such vigor that both his eardrums exploded. I would also like to remind you that this very same colleague of ours, while extracting a tooth, dislocated the patient's lower jaw and wouldn't reset it until the patient agreed to pay him five rubles for the procedure. Our esteemed colleague Kuritsin, who is married to the pharmacist Grummer's niece, is running a racket with him. Everyone is also aware that the secretary of our Association, your young friend Skoropalitelni, is living with the wife of our highly valued and esteemed chairman Gustav Gustavovitch Prechtel . . . You will notice that I have delicately moved from discussing lack of medical knowledge to unethical behavior. I have no choice! Ethics is our weak point, gentlemen, and so as not to appear a mere scandalmonger I will call to your attention our esteemed colleague Puzirkov, who at Colonel Treshinskoy's name-day party told everyone that it was not Skoropalitelni who was living with our chairman's wife but I! The effrontery of Mr. Puzirkov, whom I myself caught last year with the wife of our esteemed colleague Dr. Znobish! Speaking of Znobish—Who is it that uses his position as a doctor and can't quite be trusted when treating ladies? Znobish! Who is it that married a merchant's daughter for her dowry? Znobish! And as for our highly esteemed chairman, he secretly dabbles in homeopathy and receives money from the Prussians for espionage! A Prussian spy—that is the *ultima ratio*!"

When doctors wish to appear clever and eloquent they use two Latin expressions: *nomina sunt odiosa* and *ultima ratio*. Shelestov would drop not only Latin words but French and German ones as well—whatever you want. He would steer everyone to clear waters, rip the masks off the intriguers' faces. The chairman would ring his bell till he was exhausted—esteemed colleagues would be flying up from their seats all over the place, yelling and waving their arms; colleagues of every denomination would fall over each other in a heap: Zip-bang-wham-bang-wham-bang-wham!

Not batting an eyelash, Shelestov would continue: "And as for this Association, its current membership and organization being what it is, it is inevitably headed for destruction. Its whole structure is based exclusively on intrigues. Intrigues, intrigues, intrigues! I, as one of the victims of a mass of demonic intrigues, consider myself bound to expound the following . . ."

He would go on expounding, and his supporters would applaud and clasp their hands together in exultation. At this point, with an unimaginable uproar and peals of thunder, the voting for the new chairman would commence. Von Bronn and his cohorts would heatedly support Prechtel, but the public and the ethical group of doctors would boo them and shout: "Down with Prechtel! We want Shelestov! Shelestov!"

Shelestov would consent, but on condition that Prechtel and von Bronn ask his forgiveness for the October 2nd incident. Again there would be an unimaginable clamor, and again the esteemed colleagues of the Jewish faith would fall over each other in a heap: "Zip-bang-wham!" Prechtel and von Bronn, seething with indignation, would end up resigning from the Association. Not that he would care!

Shelestov would end up as chairman. First he would clean out the Augean Stables. Znobish—out! Terkhavyantz—out! The esteemed colleagues of the Jewish denomination—out! With his supporters he would see to it that by January not a single intriguer would be left in the Association. The first thing he would do would be to have the walls of the Association's clinic painted and hang up a sign saying "Absolutely No Smoking." Then he would fire the medical attendant and his wife, and medicine would henceforth be ordered not from the Grummer pharmacy but from the Khryashchambzhitskov pharmacy. All doctors would be forbidden to perform operations without his supervision, etc. . . . And most important, he would have visiting cards printed saying "Chairman of the Association of Doctors."

Thus Shelestov dreams as he stands at home in front of his mirror. But the clock strikes seven, reminding him that it is time to leave for the meeting. He shakes himself awake from his sweet thoughts and hurriedly tries to give his face a languid expression, but—alas! He tries to make his face languid and interesting, but it does not obey and instead becomes sour and dull, like the face of a shivering mongrel puppy. He tries to make his face look firm, but it resists and expresses bewilderment, and it seems to him now that he does not look like a puppy but like a goose. He lowers his eyelids, narrows his eyes, puffs up his cheeks, knits his brow, but all to no avail . . . damn! . . . he cannot get the right expression. Obviously, the innate characteristics of that face are such that you can't do much with them. His forehead is narrow; his small eyes flit about nervously, like those of a cunning market-woman; his lower jaw juts out somehow absurdly and stupidly; and his cheeks and hair give the impression that this "esteemed colleague" has just been kicked out of a billiard parlor.



Shelestov looks at his face, flies into a rage, and begins sensing that his face is plotting against him. He goes out into the hall, and as he is putting on his coat, his galoshes, and his hat, he feels that they are intriguing against him too.

"Cabbie, to the clinic!"

He hands the cabbie twenty kopecks, and the intriguing cabby asks for twenty-five. He sits in the droshky going down the street; the cold wind beats him in the face, the wet snow flies into his eyes, the horse drags its feet. Everything is conspiring to intrigue against him. Intrigues, intrigues, intrigues!♥

## SARAH BERNHARDT COMES TO TOWN

### TELEGRAM

Have been drinking to Sarah's health all week! Enchanting! She actually dies standing up! Our actors can't touch the Parisians! Sitting there, you feel you're in Paradise! Regards to Mankya.

—Petrov.



### TELEGRAM

Lieutenant Egorov. Come, you can have my ticket—I'm not going again. It's just rubbish. Nothing special. A waste of money.

FROM DR. KLOPSON, M.D.,  
TO DR. VERFLUCHTERSCHWEIN, M.D.

Dear friend. Last night I saw S. B. Her chest—paralytic and flat. Skeletal and muscular structure—unsatisfactory. Neck—so long and thin that both the *venae jugulares* and even the *arteriae carotides* are clearly visible. Her *musculi sternocleidomastoidei* are barely noticeable. Sitting in second-row orchestra I could detect clear signs of anemia. No cough. On stage she was all wrapped up, which led me to deduce that she must be feverish. My diagnosis: anemia and *atrophia musculorum*. What is quite amazing is that her lachrymal glands react to voluntary stimuli: Tears flowed from her eyes, and her nose showed signs of *hyperemia* whenever she was called upon to weep.

FROM NADIA N. TO KATYA H.

Dear Katya. Last night I went to the theater and saw Sera Burnyard. Oh Katya, how many diamonds that woman has! All night I cried at the thought that I'll never ever own such a heap of diamonds. (I'll tell you later all about her dress.) Oh, how I'd love to be Sera Burnyard! They were

drinking real champagne on stage! But what was strange, Katya, I speak excellent French but I didn't get a word they were saying. Their French was funny. I had to sit in the gallery! That monster of mine couldn't get me a better ticket. The monster! Now I regret I was so cold to S. on Monday, he could have got orchestra seats. S. will do anything for a kiss. Just to spite that monster, tomorrow I'll have S. get both you and me a ticket.

Your N.

FROM A NEWSPAPER EDITOR TO A REPORTER

Ivan Mikhailovitch! This is an abomination! Every evening you traipse down to the theater with a press ticket, and I have yet to see a single line about the show! What are you waiting for? Right now Sarah Bernhardt is the hottest—we need to cover her now. For God's sake, get a move on!

ANSWER:

I don't quite know what to write. Should I praise her? Let's see what everyone else writes—time's on our side.

Yours, K.

P.S. I'll be at the office today, get my pay ready. If you want the press tickets back, send someone over.

LETTER SENT BY MISS N. TO THE SAME REPORTER

You are a darling, Ivan Mikhailovitch! Thank you for the ticket! I have feasted my eyes on Sarah, and I absolutely insist that you praise her to the skies. Can you check with your office to see if my sister can also get a press ticket? I'll be most grateful to you.

Your N



# ANSWERS

It can be done—but there will be a slight fee. The fee is minimal: permission to visit you on Saturday.

## THE NEWSPAPER EDITOR FROM HIS WIFE

If you don't send me a ticket for Sarah Bernhardt tonight don't bother coming home. It's quite obvious your reporters are more important to you than your own wife. I want to go to the theater!

## FROM THE NEWSPAPER EDITOR TO HIS WIFE

Please, dear! Be reasonable! As it is, this whole Sarah Bernhardt business is driving me to distraction!

## FROM AN USHER'S NOTEBOOK

Let in four. Fourteen rubles.  
Let in five. Fifteen r.  
Let in three and one madame. Fifteen rubles.

Thank God I didn't go to the theater and that I sold that ticket I had. I heard Sarah Bernhardt

played in French. I wouldn't have understood a word...

*Major Kovalyov*

Dear Mitya! I beg of you! Can you ask your wife, tactfully, to enthuse more quietly about Sarah Bernhardt's dresses when she's with us in the box? At the last performance she was whispering so loud that I couldn't hear a word of what was being said on stage. Please ask her, but tactfully. I'd be most obliged.

*Your U.*

## FROM THE SLAVIST K. TO HIS SON

My dear son. I opened my eyes and saw omens of depravity all around! Thousands of Russian Orthodox Christians heralding a union with the people—thronging to the theater to lay their gold at the feet of that Jewess... Liberals, Conservatives...!

## A NOTE

Darling! When it comes to Sarah Bernhardt, as the saying goes: you can dip a frog in honey but it doesn't mean I'll eat it.

*Sobakevitch*

# IN AUTUMN

Night was about to fall. A crowd of coachmen and pilgrims was sitting in uncle Tikhon's tavern. An autumn downpour with raging wet winds that lashed across their faces had driven them to seek refuge there. The tired, drenched travelers sat listening to the wind, dozing on benches by the wall. Boredom was written on their faces. One coachman, a pockmarked fellow with a scarred face, held a wet accordion on his knees: he played and stopped mechanically.

Outside the tavern door, splashes of rain flew around the dim, grimy lantern. The wind howled like a wolf, yelping, as if to tear itself away from its tether by the door. From the



yard came the sound of horses snorting and hoofs thudding in the mud. It was dank and cold.

Uncle Tikhon, a tall peasant with a fat face and small, drowsy, deep-set eyes, sat behind the counter. In front of him on the other side of the counter stood a man of about forty, in clothes that were dirty and shabby but respectable. He was wearing a wrinkled summer coat covered with mud, calico pants, and rubber galoshes without shoes. His head, his thin pointed elbows, and the hands jammed into his pockets were shivering feverishly. From time to time a sudden spasm ran down his whole gaunt body, from his horribly haggard face to his rubber galoshes.

"For Christ's sake!" he said to Tikhon in his scratchy, broken bass. "Give me a drink... just



a little one, that glass there! You can put it on my tab!"

"You bet I can! Nothing but scoundrels in here!"

The scoundrel looked at Tikhon with contempt, with hatred. If he could, he would have murdered him then and there.

"You just don't understand, you lout, you numskull! It's not me begging—from deep within my guts, as you say in your peasant lingo! It's my illness begging! Can't you see that?"

"There's nothing to see! Get out!"

"You must understand! If I don't get a drink now, if I don't assuage my passion, I'm quite capable of committing a crime! By God, I'm *quite* capable! You bastard, you've been handing out drinks to drunkards for ages in your damn tavern! And you're telling me that till today you never gave a thought to what they were? Sick people, that's what! You can chain them up, beat them, flail them—as long as you give them their vodka! I humbly beg you! I implore you! I'm demeaning myself . . . Lord, how I am demeaning myself!" The scoundrel shook his head and spat on the floor.

"Give me money and you'll have your vodka!" Tikhon said.

"Where am I supposed to get money from? I've drunk it all! This coat's all I've got left. I can't give it to you, I'm not wearing anything underneath . . . d'you want my hat?"

The scoundrel gave Tikhon his felt hat, whose lining was showing through here and there. Tikhon took the hat, looked at it, and shook his head.

"I wouldn't take this if you gave it to me for nothing!" he said. "It's a piece of shit!"

"You don't like it? Then give me a drink on credit if you don't like it. When I come back from town I'll give you your fiver! Then you can choke on it! Yes, choke on it!"

"You trying to con me? What kind of a man are you? What did you come here for?"

"I want a drink. Not me, my illness! Do you understand?"

"Why are you bothering me? The road outside is full of scum like you! Go ask them in the name of Christ to give you a drink. All I'll hand out in the name of Christ is bread! You swine!"

"You can fleece them, the poor bastards, but me—I'm sorry, I can't take their money! Not me!"

The scoundrel suddenly stopped, blushed, and turned to the pilgrims.

"That's an idea! You're Christians! Will you sacrifice a fiver? I beg you from deep within my guts! I'm ill!"

"Drink water!" the small man with the pock-marked face laughed.

The scoundrel felt ashamed. He started coughing heavily and then fell silent. A few moments later he started pleading again with Tikhon. Finally he burst into tears and began offering his wet coat for a glass of vodka. In the darkness no one could see his tears, and no one took his coat because among the pilgrims there were women who did not want to see a man's nakedness.

"What am I to do now?" the scoundrel asked in a quiet voice full of despair. "What am I to do? I have to have a drink, or I might well commit a crime . . . even resort to suicide . . . what am I going to do?"

He began pacing up and down.

The mail coach rolled up, its bells ringing. The wet postman came in, drank a glass of vodka, and left. The mail coach drove on.

"I have something golden I'll give you," the scoundrel, suddenly deathly pale, said to Tikhon. "Yes, I'll give it to you. So be it! Even if what I'm doing is low-down, vile—here, take it. I am doing this despicable deed because I'm beside myself . . . even if I were brought before a court of law I would be forgiven. Take it, but only on one condition: that you give it back to me when I return. I'm giving it to you before witnesses!"

The scoundrel slid his wet hand inside his coat and took out a small gold medallion. He opened it and glanced at the portrait inside.

"I should take the portrait out, but I have nowhere to put it—I'm soaked. Damn you, take it with the portrait. But on one condition . . . my dear fellow . . . I beg you . . . don't touch this face with your fingers. I beg you, my dear fellow! Forgive me for having been so rude to you, for saying the things I said . . . I'm an idiot . . . just don't touch it with your fingers, and don't look at the face!"

Tikhon took the medallion, inspected it, and put it in his pocket.

"Stolen goods," he said, and filled a glass. "Well, fine! Drink!"

The drunkard took the glass in his hand. His eyes flashed, as much as his strength allowed his drunken, bleary eyes to flash, and he drank, drank with feeling, with convulsive pauses. Having drunk away the medallion with the portrait, he lowered his eyes with shame and went to a corner. There he perched on a bench next to the pilgrims, curled up, and closed his eyes.

Half an hour passed in stillness and silence. Only the wind howled, blowing its autumn rhapsody over the chimney. The women pilgrims were praying and soundlessly settling un-



der the benches for the night. Tikhon opened the medallion and looked at the woman's face smiling out of the golden frame, at the tavern, at Tikhon, at the bottles.

A wagon creaked outside. There was a rattling sound and then the thudding of boots in the mud. A short peasant with a pointed beard came running in. He was wet, wearing a long sheepskin coat covered in mud.

"There you go!" he shouted, banging a fiver down on the counter. "A glass of Madeira! Make it a good one!" And rakishly swiveling around on one foot, he ran his eye over the people in the tavern. "Made of sugar, are you? Chicken feathers upon thine aunt! Scared of the rain? Ha! Poor things! Who's this raisin here?"

He went over to the scoundrel and looked him in the face.

"Oh! Your Lordship!" he said. "Semyon Sergeyitch! Good Heavens! What? How come you're hanging about here in this tavern in such a state? What are you doing here? Suffering martyr!"

The squire looked at the peasant and covered his face with his sleeve. The peasant sighed, shook his head, waved his hands about in despair, and went to the counter to finish his drink.

"That's our master," he whispered to Tikhon, nodding toward the scoundrel. "Our landowner, Semyon Sergeyitch. Look at him! Look what he looks like now! Ha! Just look at that! What drink can do to you!"

The peasant gulped down his drink, wiped his mouth with his sleeve, and continued: "I'm from his village. Four hundred versts from here, from Akhtilovka . . . my folks were his father's serfs! Sad, ain't it! His Lordship was such a splendid gentleman. This horse here, the one outside, you see it? He gave it me! Ha! That's fate for you!"

The coachmen and pilgrims started crowding around the peasant. In a quiet voice, over the noises of autumn, he told them the story. Semyon Sergeyitch remained sitting in the same corner, his eyes closed, muttering to himself. He was listening, too.

"It happened because of weakness," the peasant said, gesticulating with his hands. "Too much good life! He was a rich gentleman—powerful, in the whole province! Eat, drink, cartloads! How many times he drove past this very tavern in his carriage—you must have seen him! He was rich! Five years ago he was going through Mikishkinski on a barge, and instead of a fiver he gave the man a whole ruble! His ruin was so stupid. Mainly because

of a woman. He fell in love, head over heels, with a woman from town—he loved her more than his life. But he didn't fall in love with a shining falcon. She was a black crow. Marya Egorovna, that was that damn woman's name, and with a strange last name too—you can't even pronounce it. He loved her and proposed to her, all God-fearing and correct. Then, they say, she said yes. After all, His Lordship wasn't just anybody—he was sober and rolling in money. Then one evening, I remember well, I'm walking through the garden. I look, and there they are sitting on the bench kissing. He gives her one kiss, and she, the viper, gives him two back! He kisses her hand, and her, she blushes. Then she squeezes herself close to him, damn her! I love you, she says, Semyon . . . and Semyon goes about like he's bewitched, boasting of his happiness like a fool . . . handing out a ruble here, two there, and me he gave this horse outside! He was so happy! He dropped everyone's debts! Then came the wedding. They got married all nice and proper. Then, as everyone's at the dinner, she gets up and goes with the carriage into town to the attorney, who's her lover. Right after the wedding, the harlot! At the high point! Ha! Then he went nuts, started drinking! Look at him! He's running around like a half-wit thinking of nothing but that harlot! He loves her! I bet he's on his way to town just so he can get a glimpse of her . . . But the other thing, let me tell you, the thing that really ruined him, was his brother-in-law—his sister's husband. The squire took it into his head to guarantee his brother-in-law with the bank—around thirty thousand he guaranteed! They say the scoundrel of a brother-in-law knows how to squeeze a stone—he just sat back and waited, and our master had to pay the whole thirty thousand! A fool suffers for his foolishness! His wife had children with her attorney, his brother-in-law bought an estate near Poltava, and our master wanders around from one tavern to the next like a fool, making us all listen to his moaning: 'Lost have I, dear brothers, my faith in mankind! There is no one I can, how shall I put it, believe in! Weakness, that's what it is! We all have problems! So, what are we supposed to do—start drinking? There's this corporal we used to have in the army. His wife brings the schoolmaster to her house in broad daylight—she spends all her husband's money on drink. And that corporal walks about grinning. The only effect was he lost some weight!'"

"The Lord does not provide everyone with that kind of strength!" Tikhon said.



"Yeah, everyone's strength is different, that's true!"

The peasant spoke for a long time. When he finished the tavern was silent.

"Hey, you . . . how're you feeling? You unlucky man! Here, drink!" Tikhon said, turning to the squire.

The squire came up to the counter and drank the vodka with delight.

"Give me the medallion for a second," he whispered to Tikhon. "Just one look and . . . I'll give it back to you!"

Tikhon frowned, and without saying a word handed him the medallion. The fellow with the pockmarked face sighed, shook his head, and asked for a vodka.

"Have a drink, Your Lordship! Hmm! Life is good without vodka, but it's even better with

it! With vodka even sorrow's not sorrow! Drink up!"

After five glasses the squire sat down in his corner, opened the medallion, and with clouded, drunken eyes looked for the beloved face. But the face was gone. It had fallen out of the medallion when Tikhon opened it.

The lantern flared up and went out. In the corner a woman pilgrim was mumbling in delirium. The fellow with the pockmarked face prayed aloud and then lay down on the bench. Another traveler came in. The rain poured and poured. It got colder and colder, and it seemed as if there would be no end to this vile, dark autumn. The squire was still staring at the medallion, looking for the woman's face. The candle went out.

Spring, where are you? 🍷

## FROM THE DIARY OF AN ASSISTANT BOOKKEEPER

MAY 11TH, 1863

Glotkin, our sixty-year-old bookkeeper, has been drinking milk laced with cognac for his cough, and as a result he has fallen into a violent alcoholic delirium. The doctors, with their typical self-confidence, confirm that he will die tomorrow. At last I will be bookkeeper! I have been promised this position for a long time now.

Kleshchev is to be tried for physically attacking an applicant who called him a bureaucrat. It seems that there will be a court case.

I had some fluid extracted from my stomach catarrh.

AUGUST 3RD, 1865

Glotkin, our bookkeeper, has a cold in his chest again. He is coughing and has started drinking milk laced with cognac. If he dies I will get his position. My hopes are high but somewhat shaky—experience has shown that delirium tremens is not always fatal.

Kleshchev snatched a promissory note from an Armenian and tore it up. It seems that there will be a court case.

An old village woman (Guryevna) told me



yesterday that what I have is not a catarrh but a hidden hemorrhoid. It's quite possible!

JUNE 30TH, 1867

The newspapers write that there's a cholera epidemic in Arabia. Maybe it will come to Russia and there will be many job openings. Maybe

the old bookkeeper will die and I will get his position. What vigor that man has! If you ask me, living such a long time is reprehensible.

I wonder what I should take for that catarrh of mine. Maybe some wormseed might do the trick.

JANUARY 2ND, 1870

A dog was howling all night long in Glotkin's yard. Pelageya, my cook, says that this is a definite omen, and we stayed up until two in the morning talking about how once I become bookkeeper I will buy myself a raccoon coat and a dressing gown. And maybe I will even get married! Obviously not to a young girl—I'm a bit too old for that—but to a widow.

Yesterday Kleshchev was thrown out of the club for telling a joke, at the top of his voice, mocking the patriotism of one of the members



of Ponyukhov's trade delegation. From what I hear, Ponyukhov is taking him to court.

I think I'll go to Doctor Botkin for my catarrh. They say he's good at healing . . .

JULY 4TH, 1878

The newspapers report that the plague has hit Vetlyanka. People are dropping like flies. As a precaution, Glotkin is drinking pepper vodka. As if pepper vodka would save an old fool like him! If the plague hits here I'll definitely be the new bookkeeper!

JUNE 4TH, 1883

Glotkin is dying. I went to visit him, and, crying bitter tears, I begged forgiveness for having waited for his death with such impatience. He forgave me magnanimously and suggested I drink acorn coffee for my catarrh.

Kleshchev again almost ended up in court: He rented a piano and then pawned it with the Jews. And in spite of all this he has a Stanislav medal and the rank of Collegiate Assessor. It's amazing, the things that happen in this world!

Essence of Inbir—ten grams. Kalgan portion—seven grams. Ostraya vodka—four grams. Seven-brother-blood—twenty grams. To cure catarrh, mix these with a liter of vodka,

ka, and drink one wine-glass of the mixture on an empty stomach.

JUNE 7TH, 1883

Glotkin was buried yesterday. Alas! The old man's death was of no use to me! I see him in my dreams at night, wrapped in a shroud, beckoning. And woe unto me, the sinner—I did not become the bookkeeper, Chalikov did! It was not I who got the job, but a young man with the help of the general's wife's aunt! My hopes are dashed!

JUNE 10TH, 1886

Chalikov's wife has run away. The poor man is distraught. Maybe grief will drive him to take his own life. If he does, I will be bookkeeper! There has already been talk. In other words, where there's life there's hope, and maybe the road to the raccoon coat will be short and sweet. As for getting married, it's not such a bad idea. Why not get married if the opportunity should arise? But I'll need some good advice—marriage is a serious step.

Kleshchev took Councilor Lirmanso's galoshes. It's a scandal!

Paysi the doorman suggested I use a mercuric-chloride solution for my catarrh.

I'm going to try it. ☹

## AT THE PHARMACY

**I**t was late in the evening. The private tutor Egor Alexeyitch Svoykin, so as not to waste time, went straight from the doctor's to the pharmacy.

"It's like going from a cowshed into a courtesan's boudoir!" he thought as he climbed the staircase, which was polished and covered with an expensive runner. "You're afraid to put your foot down!"

As he entered, Svoykin was struck by the aroma one finds in every pharmacy in the world. Science and medicine may change over the years, but the fragrance of a pharmacy is as eternal as the atom. Our grandfathers smelled it, and our grandchildren will smell it, too. As it was so late, there were no customers. Behind a polished yellow counter covered with labeled



jars stood a tall gentleman, his head leaning sturdily back. He had a severe face and well-groomed side-whiskers—to all appearances, the pharmacist. From the small bald patch on his head to his long pink fingernails, everything was painstakingly starched, groomed, licked

clean, as if he were standing at the altar. His haughty eyes were looking down at a newspaper lying on the counter. He was reading. A cashier sat to the side behind a wire grille, lazily counting change. On the far side of the counter two dim figures pattered about in the semidarkness, mixing a multitude of strange potions.

Svoykin went up to the counter and gave the starched gentleman the prescription. He took it without looking at it, continued reading the newspaper article to the end of the sentence, and mut-



tered, turning his head slightly: "*Calomeli grana duo, sacchari albi grana quinque, numero decem!*"

"Ja!" a sharp, metallic voice answered from the depths of the pharmacy.

The pharmacist gave directions for the drops in the same muffled, measured voice.

"Ja!" came from the other corner.

The pharmacist wrote something on the prescription, frowned, and, leaning his head back, rested his eyes again on the newspaper.

"It will be ready in an hour," he mumbled through his teeth, his eyes scanning for the sentence he had just finished reading.

"Can't I get it any sooner?" Svoykin muttered. "I can't possibly wait that long."

The pharmacist did not answer. Svoykin sat down on the sofa and waited. The cashier finished counting the change, sighed deeply, and rattled his keys. One of the dark figures in the interior was pounding away with a marble pestle. The other figure shuffled about with a blue vial. Somewhere a clock struck with rhythmic care.

Svoykin was ill. His mouth was on fire; there was a drawn-out pain in his arms and legs; foggy images tumbled about like clouds and shrouded human figures in his heavy head. He looked as if through a veil at the pharmacist, the shelves of jars, the gas burners, and the cabinets. The monotonous pounding in the marble mortar and the slow ticking of the clock seemed to him to be coming not from the outside but from inside his head. The disorientation and fogginess took over his whole body more and more, so that after a while, feeling that the pounding of the pestle was making him sick, he decided to get a hold on himself by striking up a conversation with the pharmacist.

"I think I'm getting a fever," he said. "The doctor says it's a bit soon to tell what I'm suffering from, but I'm already feeling quite weak. Thank God, though, I had the good fortune to fall sick here in the capital and not out in the village, where there's neither doctor nor pharmacy!"

The pharmacist remained stock-still and, leaning his head further back, kept on reading his newspaper. He didn't respond to Svoykin with word or movement—it was as if he hadn't heard him. The cashier yawned loudly and struck a match against his pants. The pounding of the pestle grew louder and more ringing. Seeing that no one was listening to him, Svoykin lifted his eyes to the shelf of jars and began reading the labels. At first all kinds of herbs shot before his eyes: *Pimpinella*, *Tormentilla*, *Zedoaria*, *Gentian*, and so on. Behind the herbs, tinctures flashed, -oleum's, -seed's, each name stranger and more antediluvian than the next.

"I wonder how much useless ballast there is on these shelves!" Svoykin thought. "How much

stuff must be kept in these jars just for tradition's sake, but how solid and impressive it all looks!"

Svoykin moved his eyes from the shelves to the glass cabinet next to him. He saw rubber rings, balls, syringes, jars of toothpaste, Pierrot drops, Adelheim drops, cosmetic soaps, hair-growth ointment.

A boy in a dirty apron entered the pharmacy and asked for ten kopecks' worth of ox bile.

"Could you tell me what ox bile is used for?" Svoykin asked the pharmacist, thinking it might be a handy subject for striking up a conversation.

Not getting an answer, he stared at the severe and haughty face of the pharmacist.

"God, what strange people they are!" he thought. "Why do they have science stamped all over their faces? Looking at them, you'd think they were lofty scientists, but all they do is sell hair-growth ointment and fleece you. They write in Latin and speak to one another in German . . . they act as if they're medieval or something. When you're in good health you never notice their dry, stale faces, but the moment you get sick, like me, you're horrified that a sacrosanct profession has fallen into the hands of such rigid, unfeeling characters."

Looking at the pharmacist's motionless face, Svoykin suddenly felt the uncontrollable urge to lie down somewhere in the dark, as far away as possible, away from these scientific faces and the pounding of the marble pestle. The exhaustion of illness took over his whole being. He went up to the counter and, with an imploring grimace, asked:

"Could you *please* be so kind as to hurry with my medicine! I'm . . . I'm ill . . ."

"It'll be ready soon enough . . . excuse me, but there's no leaning on the counter!"

Svoykin sat down again on the sofa and, chasing away the foggy images in his head, watched the cashier smoke.

"Only half an hour has passed," he thought. "I'm only halfway through . . . this is unbearable!"

But finally the small dark chemist came up to the pharmacist and put down next to him a box with powders and a vial of pink liquid. The pharmacist read to the end of the sentence, slowly walked away from the counter, picked up the vial, and, holding it up to his eyes, shook it. Then he put his signature on a label, tied it to the neck of the vial, and reached for the seal.

"God, what are all these rituals for?" Svoykin thought. "What a waste of time, and they even charge you extra."

The pharmacist turned around and, having finished with the liquid, went through the same procedure with the powder.

"Here you are!" he said finally, without look-



to him at Svyoykin: "Pay the cashier one ruble and ask for kopecks!"

Svyoykin put his hand in his pocket, took out a ruble, and then suddenly remembered that the ruble was all he had.

"One ruble and six kopecks?" he mumbled, embarrassed. "All I have is one ruble ... I thought a ruble would be enough ... what am I going to do?"

"I have no idea!" the pharmacist said, picking up his newspaper again.

"Under the circumstances ... I would be grateful if you would let me bring you, or maybe send you, the six kopecks tomorrow ..."

"I'm sorry, we don't give credit here."

"What am I supposed to do?"

"Go home, get the six kopecks, and then you can have your medicine."

"But ... I'm having difficulty walking, and I don't have anyone I can send ..."

"That's your problem."

"Well," Svyoykin thought. "Fine, I'll go home."

He left the pharmacy and set off for home. To reach his apartment he had to sit down five or six times. He went inside, found some change on the table, and sat down on his bed to rest. A strange power pulled his head toward the pillow. He lay down for a few minutes. Foggy images like clouds and shrouded figures blurred his consciousness. For a long time he kept thinking he had to go back to the pharmacy, and for a long time he intended to get up. But the illness prevailed. The copper coins fell out of his hand, and the sick man dreamed that he had gone back to the pharmacy and was again chatting with the pharmacist. ♥

## ELEMENTS MOST OFTEN FOUND IN NOVELS, SHORT STORIES, ETC.

A count, a countess still showing traces of a once great beauty, a neighboring baron, a liberal man of letters, an impoverished nobleman, a foreign musician, slow-witted manservants, nurses, governesses, a German bailiff, a squire, and an heir from America. Plain faces, but kind and winning. The hero—whisking the heroine off a bolting horse—courageous and capable in any given situation of demonstrating the power of his fists.

Heavenly summits; immense, impenetrable distances ... in a word, incomprehensible nature!

Fair-haired friends and red-haired foes.

A rich uncle, open-minded or conservative, depending on circumstances. His death would be better for our hero than his constant denials.

A count in the town of Timbov.

A doctor with an anxious face, giving hope in a crisis; often he will have a bald pate and a walking stick with a knob. And where there's a doctor, there is always rheumatism that arises



from the difficulties of righteousness; migraine; inflammation of the brain; nursing of wounds after duels, and the inevitable prescribing of water cures.

A butler, in service for generations, ready to follow his master into the fire. A superb wit.

A dog so clever he can practically speak, a parrot and a thrush.

A dacha outside Moscow and an impounded estate in the south.

Frequent purposeless references to electricity.

A wallet made of Russian leather; Chinese porcelain; an English saddle. A revolver that doesn't misfire, a medal on a lapel, pineapples, champagne, truffles, and oysters.

Inadvertently overhearing words that suddenly make everything clear.

An immeasurable number of interjections and attempts at weaving in the latest technical terms.

Gentle hints at portentous circumstances.

More often than not, no ending.

Seven deadly sins at the beginning and a wedding at the end.

The end ♥



# AT YOUR DISPOSAL

The funeral industry prepares for boom times  
By Judith Newman

Show me the manner in which a nation or a community cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender sympathies of its people, their respect for the law of the land and their loyalty to high ideals.

—Motto appearing on funeral-industry paraphernalia

Now, here's what you do if you've tied their mouths too tight, or they have no lips and the nily's not happy," says Tina Ousley, placing a pencil over the mouth of an audience volunteer. Using an airbrush, she gently sprays on a full, pink pout in vermilion. "And these stay on, even when people are kissing their loved ones good-bye!" Ousley, the president of Dinair Airbrush Makeup Systems of Beverly Hills, California, is a makeup artist for Hollywood stars, but occasionally she takes clients who are, well, less fussy. She is here, at the 115th annual convention of the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) in Cincinnati, to show her system of airbrushed makeup



for glamorizing the deceased.

"Hmm, sort of like detailing a car," murmurs a man behind me, as Ousley, a cheerful, birdlike blonde, demonstrates how easy it is to cover bruises and restore a "natural" glow to skin. At the end of Ousley's demonstration comes the *pièce de résistance*: airbrushing, compared with the application of conventional cosmetics, makes it much easier to beautify the client who suffered from jaundice; apparently, when a jaundiced corpse is embalmed, the chemicals can turn it green. Grabbing another volunteer from the audience, Ousley first airbrushes him the color of

Herman Munster, then attempts to restore him to his natural hue by spraying him white, as a primer, and applying an alabaster foundation. When I finally fled the room, the volunteer was the shade of a buttermilk. He would have looked perfectly natural had he been not a human but a suburban kitchen circa 1950. Ousley did not look happy.

Here's the thing about death that's hard to grasp: It's going to happen to you. Whether you are embalmed and entombed or your ashes are shot out of a duck blind,

your loved ones will be spending a small portion of the \$7 billion that every year is poured into the U.S. funeral industry. Since the average funeral costs about \$4,600—not including the expense of the cemetery or mausoleum, which can add thousands more—disposing of their dead is, for many families, one of the most expensive purchases they will ever make, right behind a house or a car.

No matter when you go, you'll be in good company: approximately 2.3 million people in the United States die each year. But if you're a baby boomer who pays attention to the actuarial ta-



bles and plans to go obediently to a final reward in twenty-five to thirty-five years, you'll have to hustle others out of the way for a glimpse of that white light by the time the national death rate will have increased by about 30 percent. So naturally, funeral directors must be a little somberly about this news, then retreating into a small, quiet backroom office and doing the hora.

Well, not exactly. True, the nation's 22,000 funeral homes can look forward to a decline of death—a certain consolation, since the average home handles about two deaths a week (fewer in sparsely populated rural areas). And since families have traditionally selected funeral homes based not on cost comparisons or value but on proximity—or, as Jim St. George, president and CEO of ConsumerCasket USA, a retail-coffin outlet, puts it, on “whoever can get Mama out of the living room fastest”—it would seem that the impending good fortune would be proportionally shared by all. But funeral directors are worried, because, as they see it, the baby boomers, who are now making decisions about how to dispose of their loved ones, are “under-ritualized.” Religious observance is on a downswing, families are scattered around the country, and thus attendance at funerals has dropped significantly. “Baby boomers have developed a certain cynicism about what is traditional and what isn’t,” adds St. George. “And there’s nothing traditional about getting ripped off.”

On the other hand, this is also the Krups generation, a tidal wave of Americans who have had a passionate love affair with credit and a will to pay \$5 for a cup of decaffeinated coffee. Many of us have ostentatiously lived the good life.

It's time to come to choose for ourselves and for our parents. The

The funeral industry fervently believes—as I saw at the national convention last fall, they're not tak-

**M**ore seminar is called “Issues That Affect the Funeral Director's Bottom Line.” “Survival” is the buzzword in the industry, and speakers talk about

the advantages—and profitability—of offering everything from catered lunches to grief therapy. Nobody could quite explain to me why I should be entrusting my mental health to guys whose favorite motto is “It ain't the dead who give you trouble, it's the living,” but that's okay. Most directors are keenly aware that today's bereaved were raised on self-help books and support groups and are willing to pay a reasonable fee to unburden themselves to strangers.

The seminar quickly focuses around an ongoing source of anxiety: cremation, the increasingly popular and ostensibly inexpensive choice for disposal. (Fun fact: the average person takes an hour and a half to burn; the heavier you are, the hotter you burn, because fat acts as combustible fuel.) In 1963, only about 4 percent of the American population opted for the pyre; now, with cemetery space increasingly scarce and expensive, 21 percent nationwide prefer cremation, and more than 40 percent prefer it in such states as California and Arizona.

Of course, some segments of the population are still relatively unaffected by this disturbing trend toward cheap disposal. It's a not very well-kept secret that poorer families spend a disproportionate amount of their income on death. Dwayne Banks, an assistant professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley, who studies the economics of funerals and cemeteries, recently completed a paper on how the “Nike mentality” can afflict inner-city families making funeral arrangements. “In this society we're valued by our material possessions—not only by what we have but by our ability to purchase things,” explains Banks. “So if you look at the cultural context of the inner cities, it makes sense: the way of showing you valued the deceased is by providing in death what you couldn't provide in life.” And the fascinating thing, Banks adds, is that the community will rally around you. “You might not be able to get together the money for college, but death brings about this sense of communalism. For a funeral, a family will pull resources together and the church will contribute. It's what people dream of America being.”

But even if poor and working-class

families have not changed their spending habits in recent years, there remains the threat of middle-class boomers, who increasingly are opting for the simplicity of cremation. The emerging problem for the funeral rectors is this: how to transform information from an event they dub “call, we haul, that's all” to the payoff of a full-blown ritual?

For years the industry line was that cremation was sacrilege, a cheap way to treat the body. Funeral directors lobbied state legislatures to ban ash scattering, painting pictures of a world where little Johnny out playing in a park would find recognizable bits of Grandma that had not been adequately incinerated. Despite the industry's campaign of disinformation, more and more citizens are taking matters into their own hands and scattering ashes of their loved ones out at sea or over Wrigley Field. After a couple of decades, the industry realized that cremation could be every bit as profitable as traditional burial; all it took was a little ingenuity and a good deal of manipulation.

Brian Joseph, who runs a funeral home in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, advises the audience to “educate yourself to the ‘disaster family’ that comes to you and says, ‘We just want nothing.’” They may *think* they want nothing, explains Joseph, but the sympathetic funeral director knows better. The family just doesn't understand its options.

And what options there are! On that day, I watch a sales tape produced by The York Group, one of the largest casket-and-urn manufacturers in the United States. Actors appear plucked from the Infomercial Society of Subtle Emoting play a family trying to decide what to do with Dad a few years—because Dad, although crotchety, is still very much alive and is arguing with his family about the future ceremony. “Just put me in a box,” he says. “Better still, cremate me! Throw my ashes in my garden and maybe I can raise better tomatoes when I'm dead than I could when I was alive.” Clearly, the funeral director (played here by an oil slick with legs) must make the family realize how important a service (\$300 to \$600) would be to his family and friends.



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embalming, Dad (\$300 to \$600) would make everyone at the memorial service more "comfortable." And after his loved ones pick up his "cremains," his wife could then place a portion in a solid bronze "Eden urn" with a lovely garland design (about \$1,400), and his daughter could preserve a sprinkle of him in a lovely limited-edition keepsake urn depicting dolphins frolicking in the surf (about \$1,300). Finally, the remainder of his ashes could be sprinkled not only on his tomatoes but also in a cemetery scattering garden (\$150 to \$400), so "that way you'll always know where your husband's cremated remains are located."

By the end of the tape, the Jones family is smiling delightedly at the thought of what a splashy exit Dad is going to make. Dad is delighted, too. From a degrading \$400 direct cremation to a deeply meaningful \$5,000-or-so ritual—it's so easy!

If only this scenario were fantasy. It's not. Cremations, although still often cheaper than traditional burials, are climbing ever higher in price. And since scattering remains requires a permit that funeral directors encourage people to think is more difficult to obtain than it actually is, the demand for urns, and for final resting places to put them, is also going through the roof, as the sudden boom of high-rise mausoleums in Los Angeles attests. "Don't forget about one additional product you can sell with cremation: the vault for the urn," says Brian Joseph at the end of his presentation. "We don't have some vault to put the vault in. We may someday," he adds wistfully.

*A long list but not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right.*

Thomas Paine.  
Quoted by Bob Ninker, the  
executive director of the  
Funeral Ethics Association

**N**ot until the late 1800s, when a more transient society began to require that someone other than the deceased's family or neighbors handle the body, was the funeral industry born. Undertakers originally were carpenters

who built coffins on the side; sensing a profit center, they learned how to embalm. A typical late-nineteenth-century bill, quoted by Jessica Mitford in her 1963 groundbreaking indictment of the funeral industry, *The American Way of Death*, showed that embalming ran around \$10; renting a hearse, \$8 to \$10; washing and dressing, \$5. A few dollars were invariably thrown in for the embalmer being "in attendance." Embalming, the practice of replacing the body's blood with a chemical preservative, became popular in the United States during the Civil War, when battlefield casualties had to be shipped home; before that, burials took place within a few days of death, and bodies were kept on ice. Arsenic was the embalming chemical of choice until the 1920s, when it became apparent that it was (a) carcinogenic and (b) confusing in murder cases: in several trials involving arsenic, guilt could not be proven because the chemical was already present in the embalmed body.

At any rate, embalming became perhaps the first service provided by the funeral industry that was almost always unnecessary and, because of its profitability, almost always performed. (In fact, modern embalming usually preserves the body only for a few weeks; the politico corpses that hang around for years—Marcos, Lenin, Evita—are preserved through careful climate control.) And thus began the industry's reputation for price gouging.

"People in the funeral industry have always had a bad rep," notes Mark Nonestied, a member of the Association for Gravestone Studies, who lectures on the history of the funeral industry. "First, you've got a group of people associated with death. There are some cultures where people who deal with dead bodies are shunned altogether, and in this culture there's certainly a stigma attached. Second, there's the fact that bad experiences are more memorable, because the average person connects with the funeral director at the time of his greatest vulnerability."

Such collective distaste is reinforced by stories like the one Nonestied tells next. "Did you hear about

the guy in California? He was even a funeral director, but what the public thinks of the funeral industry." Allan Vieira, a fifty-year-old pilot from Berkeley, had been contracted by local mortuaries to scatter the cremated remains of thousands of people at sea, for \$100 a body. (That was the fixed with the mortuaries; the reaved paid hundreds, perhaps thousands, more.) Instead of scattering the ashes, however, Vieira stored them in his airplane hangar and a self-storage warehouse stuffed so that the walls collapsed, which how his duplicity was discovered. Several lawsuits have been filed against the pilot and the mortuary that contracted him. (Vieira, however, has already paid the ultimate price. A few weeks after he was caught, he drove to the woods and shot himself; his station wagon contained eleven more boxes of cremains.) In 1988, a \$31.1 million judgment was won against an pilot who had promised to scatter the ashes of 5,342 people but instead dumped them, in one nice big pile, on a ten-acre lot of land he owned in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada.

What probably nettles the public more than such occasional tales of gross negligence is the velvet-padded tactics funeral directors routinely use to wear down traumatized survivors—not unkindly, not with great calculation, but simply because this is the way the business has always been run.

"You see, there is usually only one thought going through the mind of a bereaved family when they walk through the doors of a funeral home and that thought is, *Get me out of here*," says ConsumerCasket's George, who for ten years works at a mortuary in Erie, Pennsylvania. "Of course, every funeral director knows this. Which is why the expensive merchandise is always brought to their attention first—why, for example, the less expensive caskets are always shown in the darkest possible colors."

Then there are the markup prices. In most businesses, a 100 to 150 percent markup is common; in the funeral industry, says St. George,

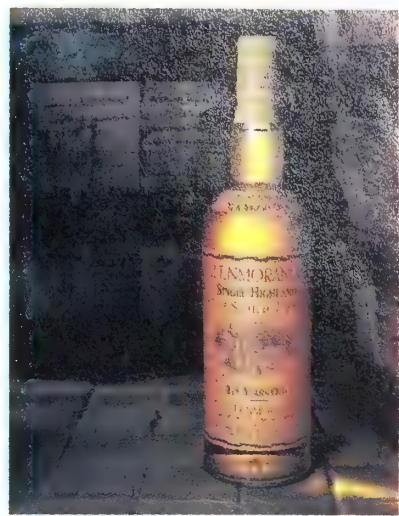


cup are 300 to 600 percent. ere I worked, we'd sit around in tings itemizing every single g we used in the course of a fu-, right down to the ligature we ed per body to sew up incisions. ture—that's string for you ople. We'd triple the price of thing, including cold cream we th to rub on the deceased's hands. rally, we had to charge for the e jar."

part, markups are due to the way al costs are structured. Before , the cost of a funeral was based on rice of a casket. There was all sorts icanery involved in getting a cus- r to purchase an expensive box, n any case the cost of the coffin ind the bare bones of a traditional al service: transportation of the ased, embalming, staffing at the ce, announcement cards, etc. In , the Federal Trade Commission that a funeral director had to to use caskets that the bereaved l buy from retailers such as Con- rCaskets, but he could bill cus- rs for allowing it into his mortu- a practice the memorial societies to as a "corkage fee."<sup>1</sup> In 1994, TC again changed the rules and ed corkage fees. Yet what seemed slap on the wrist of the funeral in- y has turned out to be a big wet Now all costs are billed separate- d although savvy consumers can a cheaper casket, the funeral di- r can charge a "non-declinable which is the cost of his overhead, ver he chooses to define it.

the Riverside Memorial Chapel ount Vernon, New York, for ex- e (a home owned by the con- erate Service Corporation Inter- nal), the non-declinable fee is 5. The cheapest package costs 8; it covers moving the remains e funeral home and an "alterna- ontainer" (read: cardboard box). ets, flowers, limos, embalming, etology, announcement cards,

umber of cut-rate casket manufacturers ut up Web pages on the Internet; there's Web site ([www.xroads.com/~funerals](http://www.xroads.com/~funerals)) uined by Father Henry Wasielewski, a tired parish priest and crusader in e, Arizona, that details funeral-indus- ms so that consumers can gauge their y neighborhood mortician's markup.



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the cases, register books, burial temporary grave markers, and other services in the new price list. To name it, it's extra. (Did I mention the cost of refrigeration? If the body is in the funeral home for more than six hours, it costs an additional \$550. At those rates it would be cheaper to put up your dear departed at The Plaza.)

In pursuit of profits, the funeral industry has demonstrated an unseemly propensity for capitalizing on public ignorance. In the 1980s, thousands of funeral homes started tacking on a \$200 "handling fee" for people who had died of AIDS. When gay-rights groups complained, it was renamed a "contagious-disease fee"; then it was called a "protective-clothing fee," until, one by one, states began to enforce against the discriminatory fee.

"The thing is, the protective clothing embalmers have to wear is a throwaway 'moon suit' that costs ten bucks and surgical gloves that cost about ten cents a pair—and OSHA has declared this gear mandatory for every embalming," says Karen Leonard, the consumer representative for Funeral and Memorial Societies of America, an organization dedicated to providing dignified and affordable funeral services. "But lots of funeral directors justified the \$200 to families by citing all the extra risk they were assuming." When the required safety procedures were followed, however, there was no extra risk. "Think about it for a minute," says Leonard. "If you were in mortal fear for your life, would \$200 make a difference?"

*You know what I've decided. I don't want to be cremated. I used to, but now I think it sounds just a little too much like a blender speed. Now I've decided I want to be embalmed, and then I want a plastic stenciled name put in silicone implants everywhere. Then I want to be laid out in the woods like Snow White, with a gravestone that reads Gotta Dance.*

—Lorrie Moore, "Starving Again"

As expensive as funerals may seem, when adjusted for inflation, the price of a funeral is only about 10 percent higher than it was in the last

twenty-five years. It's the creative introduction of all sorts of new services and accoutrements, says Berkeley professor Dwayne Banks, that has increased the range of prices.

I got a little taste for all those delicious extras during a tour of the exhibitor's floor at the NFDA. First I spotted the mahogany casket my grandfather had unfortunately test-driven into eternity a few years earlier. At the time, the funeral director was keen on selling my family a model with a special seal to "protect" the body from wildlife; I seem to recall a speech that featured a Hirschcockian vision of marauding gophers. The memory made me a little nauseous: I had recently discovered that, far from protecting the body, the expensive protective seal is the best way to guarantee that anaerobic bacteria will turn the body into goo in record time.

Moving on, I strolled through row upon row of caskets, burial vaults, embalming chemicals to plump up dehydrated tissues (my favorite: a disinfectant called Mort-O-Cide), and restorative waxes to fill in those pesky irregularities left by, say, feeding tubes or gunshot wounds. Burial clothing consists of loose-fitting pastel nightgowns for ladies and pin-stripe suits for the gents; apparently, in the afterlife, all women are napping and all men are taking meetings. The dominatrix in me almost sprang for an "extremities positioner," a rope gadget for the proper positioning of the arms over the chest. The Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science was trolling for students, proudly exhibiting a life-size model of Uncle Sam in restorative wax ("Careful, his limbs come off easily!"), and the American Funeral Service Museum in Houston exhibited Victorian mourning jewelry made from the hair of the deceased and memorial cards of the rich and famous (some jokester had placed Bobby Kennedy's next to Marilyn Monroe's).

These days, you can buy blowup digital "memory pictures" of the deceased to leave at the graveside and solar-powered memorial lights to keep those pictures backlit into eternity. For the pious, the NFDA

exhibitors offered urns with portraits of Jesus and Mary; for the sportsman, there were urns shaped like deer, cowboy boots, and golf club bags; and for Zsa Zsa Gabor impersonators, an Aurora, Ill., mortician has created a line of memorial jewelry—gold-and-diamond hearts, teardrops, and cylinders (from \$1,995 to \$10,000) that hold a few precious motes of DNA and Dad.

Batesville Casket Company, the largest manufacturer in the United States, was introducing a coffin with a special "memory drawer" for personal keepsakes. Marsellus Casket Company featured "the Rolls Royce of caskets," a hand-polished model of solid American mahogany lined with velvet (retailing about \$10,000) that had been the resting place for such stiff luminaries as Richard Nixon, Harry Truman, and John Kennedy. "And don't forget the O., O.," said the salesman excitedly. Marsellus may have had presidential cachet, but The York Group was impressing crowds with a new casket model called "Expressions": the light, ash-colored exterior is treated with a veneer that allows the casket to be scrawled with a Magic Marker. "We see this as a top seller in the inner cities, for the teen market," a York salesman told me. "You know, a kid goes, his homie wishes him well."

Companies whose primary source of business is in more lively industries are scavenging for scraps of the market as well. GeneLink, a Maryland, New Jersey, company that does DNA testing and storage, was offering the bereaved an opportunity to save a bit more of a loved one than mere dust. The mouth of the deceased was swabbed for a cell sample, which was sent to GeneLink's lab in Fort Worth, Texas, where the DNA is extracted and stored for twenty-five years. The costs about \$100, and funeral directors will be charging about \$295 for collecting a sample. I must admit I never quite understood why anyone would want this service; after all, if you fear you are at increased risk for some genetically linked problem, such as Alzheimer's, you could always yourself.

Here's an idea that *does* make sense to me: cybergrieving. Jack Martin



of Simplex Knowledge, an Internet production company in White Plains, New York, has come up with an idea that's bound to appeal to boomers and Gen Xers: a Web funeral. Mourners will be issued a Web password; a camera will be set up at the funeral, and pictures of the service will be broadcast on the Internet every thirty seconds or so. "The family funeral director can choose what to highlight," says Martin. "The family, the body, the minister, the eulogy, the casket, the flowers, the ever." About half of the funeral directors who have learned about Martin's concept see it as a valuable marketing tool, a service they could offer for free. The other half see it as a profitable: fees could be collected not only from the families (about \$200) but also from the mourners. "They imagined that someone, in New Jersey without Internet access, could drop by their funeral home to witness a service going on in California," says Martin. "And then the funeral director could charge each mourner ten or twenty bucks. But I don't think this concept will

go over too well. Making people pay to mourn isn't such great publicity for the industry."

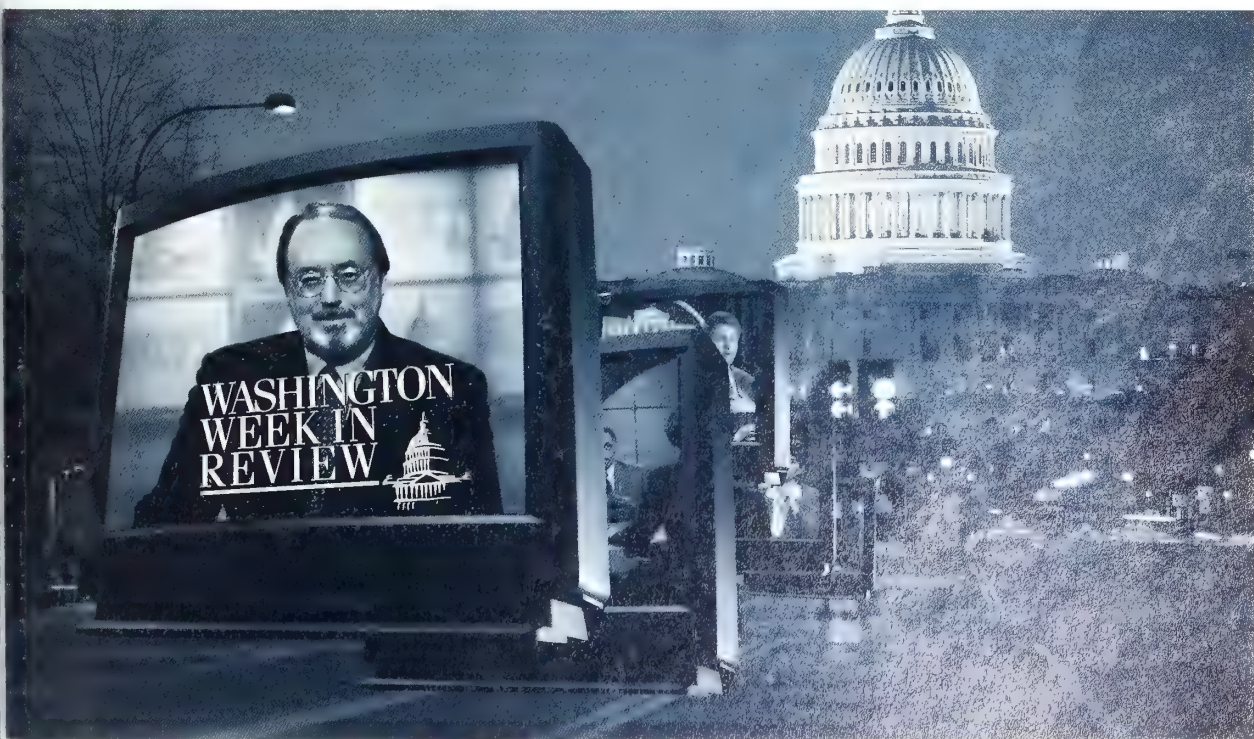
Of course, it's possible to bypass the traditional burial altogether. You might want to be put on ice until medical science figures out a cure for what ails you (the first cryonically frozen man, James H. Bedford, just celebrated his thirtieth anniversary of "de-animation," as cryonics enthusiasts call it). Then again, you might want to have yourself mummified. On its Web page, Summum, a New Age, quasi-religious organization in Salt Lake City that practices modern mummification, offers this sales pitch: "Unlike the mummification techniques used by ancient Egyptians, which left the dead shriveled, discolored, and ugly, Summum's method is designed to keep you looking healthy and robust for millennia. The appeal may be to anyone who has labored to stay in shape. Why spend thousands of dollars in health-club fees while you're alive, then let everything go to pot just because you've died?"

Why, indeed.

*You know what's real tough about this business? No one's real happy to see you.*

—Bob Jones, Jones Funeral Home, Altoona, Pennsylvania

At the end of the day, I was slumped at the hotel bar with a gin and tonic. The convention had no shortage of activities. I could have gone to hear Marvin Hamlisch give a command performance or had my picture taken with former astronaut Buzz Aldrin, who stood around in his flight suit looking a little confused; one funeral director solemnly shook his hand and murmured, "God bless America." But I wasn't up for merriment. I was exhausted. The worst thing about being at a funeral directors' convention was having to be around people who are so nice all the time; if I happened to be going through a door, four funeral directors would materialize from nowhere to open it for me. Despite their somber workaday attire, morticians are a jolly lot, and in a game effort to show they know



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his 1948 novel *The Loved One*, Evelyn Waugh satirized morticians' eagerness to people into prepaying for their own funerals. "Choose now, at leisure and in health, or at the moment of final preparation you require, or it while you are best able to do so, shed your anxiety. Pass the buck, Mr. Barlow; perishing Glades can take it." Recently, a number of lawsuits have been filed against companies refusing to honor preneed contracts. The money is supposed to go into a trust or escrow account, and the interest will compensate for the rate of inflation. There are two major problems: (1) although the funeral director gets to control the money, you have to pay taxes on the interest you'll never see; and (2) governmental oversight varies wildly. In some states, says Simon, publisher of *Preneed Perspectives*, preneed trust funds are required and fully monitored, and in others—such as Arlington, D.C., and Alabama—"the funeral director can take your \$5,000, go to Atlantic City, and put it on red."

hearse. After the service, Titemore had removed him from his pricey casket and then didn't seem quite sure what to do with him. Titemore's license was revoked. After completing his jail time, he found work as a used-car salesman.

A solidly built, bright-eyed man in a black polyester Elvis shirt and ruby jacket sits next to me, sipping Long Island iced teas with his wife. He notices me staring at his ensemble. "Don't get to wear this much around the home," he says. Ben Strickland's his name. Runs Seymour Funeral Home, sweet little operation in North Carolina. Knew he was right for the work when he embalmed a friend; knew nobody could do it better. "Don't want nobody to die, but I gotta eat," he says. Ben is a natural storyteller: we talk about gypsy funerals, where mourners throw money on top of the body; we talk about the fellow who was buried with his chihuahua's ashes. "He and his wife didn't have children. That was their baby," Ben explains. Ben loves everything about his business. Everything but the children. "Touches me real bad to have a child or infant die. Seventy-five, eighty, they lived their life. But a child?" Ben's eyes fill with tears.

Embarrassed, I look away; he thinks I'm looking at his watch. "Like that?" he says, playing with the thick gold band. "Took a lotta teeth to make this'un here."

I look up; Ben's still wiping his eyes, but he's grinning. "Gotcha!" he cries.

No question about it: Death care is becoming a hot career. According to the American Board of Funeral Service Education, since 1990 there has been a 45 percent increase in the number of students enrolled in mortuary-schools. And what used to be almost an entirely male-dominated industry is now increasingly estrogen-rich: in 1996, 33 percent of mortuary school grads were women. "There are several factors at work here," says Gordon Bigelow, ABFSE's executive director. "As we've gone through corporate downsizing, a number of adults looking for second and third careers have focused on funeral service as a recession-proof industry. And then, of course, there's

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tapestry of medieval  
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the fact that the baby boom generation is beginning to, ah, terminate. According to the National Funeral Directors Association, the average funeral director makes about \$49,000 a year (twice that in large, metropolitan firms). And considering that one needs no more than two years of college to get a funeral director's license, the Grim Reaper offers a pretty promising and secure future.

"It's becoming cooler to be a funeral director than it once was," says one young buck, whose perfectly tailored sharkskin suit suggests one too many viewings of the movie *GoodFellas*. We are shouting at each other over the din of an oompah band; Wilbert Funeral Services is sponsoring an Oktoberfest, complete with knee-slapping dancers in Tyrolean hats and lederhosen. Y.B. scans the room, a trace of a sneer on his blandly handsome face. "This is still a very clip-on-tie-and-polyester crowd, though."

Maybe, but the clip-on set is what made this country great. The vast majority of funeral directors are solid citizens in their communities, overwhelmingly conservative and Republican. Rotarians and Kiwanis Club members, they believe in boosterism and practice it too.

We whine about how much money they make, how they capitalize on grief and loss. Our irrationality about death leads us to believe that no one has a right to make a living from it. But let's look at it this way: It's 2:00 A.M., and after a long and debilitating illness Nana has shuffled off this mortal coil. In your house. In the summer. Your air conditioner has broken down. By the time you find her, Nana is beginning to leak.

Do you want their job? I didn't think so.

**U**nderneath the lingering scent of lilies and formaldehyde, however, there lurks the unmistakable stench of money. Three months after the Cincinnati convention, I'm sitting in on a seminar called "Death Care IV: An Undertaking in New York." It's for financial analysts and investors who track the rapidly consolidating funeral industry; the tacit theme of the day is "Stiffs: They're

Thinking I'm also an analyst, an impeccably groomed brunette—one of only about five women in the packed room—leans over and proffers some helpful advice. "Projections for the next quarter are looking good," she whispers. "The strain of flu that's hit this season is *really* virulent."

Thirty years ago, when she wrote *The American Way of Death*, Jessica Mitford accurately predicted just about every trend that has since come to pass in the funeral industry—most significantly, the rise of the giant funeral chain. Together, the Houston-based Service Corporation International (SCI) and The Loewen Group, headquartered in Burnaby, British Columbia, own about 2,000, or 10 percent, of America's mortuaries. (Smaller chains such as Carriage Services and Stewart Enterprises account for another 300 or so.) Traditionally, funeral homes were the ultimate mom-and-pop operations, run by legions of slightly creepy moms and pops whose business acumen was usually not the soundest. Jim St. George recalls how the funeral home where he worked tried to compete with lower-priced mortuaries: "We only had one person standing around to say hello to strangers at the visitation instead of three or four. Oh, and we didn't put candy in the candy dishes, mourners weren't allowed to use the coffee room, and we didn't fold the first paper on the toilet roll into a little triangle, like they do in hotels."

With Pecksniffian economies like these commonplace, it's no wonder someone would start taking a McDonald's-like approach to marketing and service. Quietly, relentlessly, SCI and Loewen have been coming into town and buying up homes and cemeteries, leaving the current management in place—at least for a while. One funeral director compares the takeovers to the movie *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. "You think you're dealing with the same people you've always known and trusted. But they're not. They're pods. The business has nothing to do with community values anymore. Everything about the way they run their business now has to be decided from a headquarters that knows

nothing and cares nothing about community."

The big chains don't see it this way. They say they're leaving the funeral directors to do what they do best: caretaking—and letting the suits make the business decisions. They want economies of scale. SCI, for example, will go into an area, buy five or six funeral homes, and pool their resources—with one central embalming site, a roving staff, a fleet of hearses that can float from home to another, caskets bought in volume, and so forth.

But if you think consolidation means that the cost of dying is suddenly going to become more reasonable, think again. The *Seattle Times* found that in Washington State, where 49 percent of the funeral homes are owned by chains, the cost of funerals has risen by as much as 50 percent since 1992—because the client is no longer the family of the deceased but the stockholder.

In fact, so bullish is Wall Street on death care that this year saw the introduction of the Pausé Toml Fund, a mutual fund diversified in the death-care industry. The prospectus is filled with exciting charts and graphs, showing how Tombstone had been around since 1986, it would have soundly beaten the performances of the Dow Jones Industrial Average, Standard & Poor's, and the Russell 3000 Index: "Industry demographics indicate that the death care industry will continue to experience long-term expansion to the aging of the U.S. population and the estimated growing number of future annual deaths." In a quiet moment, you can almost hear the sound of investors hyperventilating.

Back at the seminar, the senior financial officer for Stewart Enterprises, Ronald Patron, confidently quotes predictions that his company will see a 20 percent growth. No one raises his hand and asks about the question on everyone's mind: SCI's recent attempt at a takeover of Loewen had failed, preventing what one industry pundit said was "the equivalent to Enron and Coca-Cola merging." But the FTC made noises about regulating prices and launched antitrust



ons in eleven states. "We don't  
 any problems in either of those  
 " Patron said soothingly. "The  
 recently renewed its rules about  
 disclosure of pricing, but there's  
 ulation of pricing."  
 haps I just imagined I heard a  
 tive sigh of relief. It was sort  
 appalling. Naturally, I went  
 and bought stock in SCI.

he public backlash against fu-  
 neral monopolies is in its in-  
 fancy, but it will die young  
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 Like health care, the funeral  
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 re for and bury their loved ones.  
 ill but eight states in this coun-  
 you don't need a funeral director  
 " says Lisa Carlson, author of

*Caring for Your Own Dead: The Final  
 Act of Love.* "You have to learn how to  
 do the paperwork, but it's certainly  
 not that hard." And the body itself?  
 "Care for people when they're dead is  
 the same as when they're alive, except  
 you don't have to feed them," she says.  
 In fact, it's not much more involved  
 than that—especially if the body is  
 kept cold and disposed of within a cou-  
 ple of days.

Before Jessica Mitford died of brain  
 cancer last year, she made a last re-  
 quest to Karen Leonard, the consumer  
 activist who was also Mitford's re-  
 searcher. "Decca [Mitford's nickname]  
 wanted me to send her funeral bill to  
 SCI. 'After all,' she said to me, 'look  
 how much fame I brought them!'"  
 Leonard sent the bill, \$475 for direct  
 cremation, to CEO Robert Waldrip,  
 pointing out how much more expen-  
 sive it would have been if Mitford had  
 been cremated at an SCI-affiliated fu-  
 neral home. "I wanted him to know he  
 was in Decca's thoughts at the end,"  
 Leonard says. "Oddly enough, we nev-  
 er heard from him."

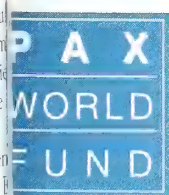
Unlike Jessica Mitford, I think we  
 are the victims not of the funeral in-

dustry but of ourselves. A friend of  
 mine, a former flack at the public re-  
 lations firm Hill and Knowlton, de-  
 scribed a campaign for the National  
 Funeral Directors Association she  
 worked on a few years ago: "The idea  
 was, we really had to create a cachet  
 for death. You wouldn't cheap out on  
 a wedding—why would you do it for a  
 funeral?" The campaign never quite  
 got off the ground, but it spoke elo-  
 quently to the guilt and desires of a  
 generation that perhaps wasn't quite  
 as kind to its elders as it should have  
 been, a generation that trashed its par-  
 ents' values and then tried desperat-  
 ely to acquire the things those values—  
 respect, hard work, constancy,  
 sacrifice—bought.

In some ways, we are more careful  
 consumers than we used to be. But  
 we are also terribly unsure of our-  
 selves, unsure of our goodness, un-  
 sure of our souls. What a relief it is  
 to be able to make up for our sins to  
 the living by being generous to them  
 after they're dead. When it comes to  
 their future livelihoods, I'm quite  
 sure the funeral directors of America  
 may rest in peace.

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 charges and expenses, please call for a prospectus to read carefully before investing. Investment return and principal value may rise or fall.



# THE UNSPARING VISION OF DON DELILLO

In his new novel, *Underworld*, an American fresco

By Vince Passaro

*The final conquest of humanity by death was a symbolic subject for artists during the Middle Ages. . . . In Bruegel's painting, done about 1562, the agents of death spare no one. Their bony hands touch king, cardinal, pilgrim and peasant. A fool hides under a table to escape the pale rider on the pale horse, who drives the living into a chamber of doom. Far away, ships and fortresses go up in flames, and on a stark hillside two skeletons toll the death knell of the world.*

—Magazine caption to Pieter Bruegel's *The Triumph of Death*, included in "Don DeLillo's America," a Web site at <http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/~gardner/delillo.html>

**T**he novelist Don DeLillo, toller of death knells, has a Web site devoted to him now, along with Thomas Pynchon, Jacques Cousteau, Naughty Nancy the Neighbor's Wife, and about half the world. "Don DeLillo's America" is closely and painstakingly maintained, and, unlike most Web sites, proves informative and even inspired. Created by Curt Gardner, a lone-gunman curator in California, the site services a host of fans willing to send Gardner

the DeLillian esoterica that these days can make such sites more fruitful than a good many libraries. Regarding DeLillo's new novel, *Underworld*, Gardner has been on the story for a long time: he has a special page covering the novel's prologue, which ran in this magazine as the novella *Pafko at the Wall* in 1992, as well as news of the book's ongoing development, near-million-dollar sale to Scribner, and October publication. *Life* magazine's print of the Bruegel painting makes a memorable appearance in *Underworld*, and Gardner not only supplies the *Life* page number, edition, and caption but also links the viewer to an electronic version of the painting so that one may see for oneself the figures of gloom,

shimmering in an eternal pixilated dance.

**S**uch is the interest now in Don DeLillo. His reputation as one of the most influential American novelists of his time has accumulated in sedimentary layers beneath the tides of commercial, hedge-your-bets critical approval and twitchy political discomfort. It happened through the word of mouth of other writers and passionate readers, assisted by what is a rare connection nowadays—academic interest and support. Meanwhile, the popular press often resists DeLillo: whereas Michiko Kakutani of the *New York Times* named his 1985 nov-

el, *White Noise*, the book she believed most likely to last over the next hundred years, a number of critic readers not only don't like his but deeply resent it—for the cinematic accuracy of his vision for the taut, stylized modernism language and narrative sensibility.

As shrewdly compiled by Gardner on the Web site, writers as diverse as interests as Bruce Bawer, George and Jonathan Yardley have of DeLillo, among other things, un-otie, a weird accusation against a at this late date and a sign of the and psychological uneasiness DeL writing can evoke. In particular DeLillo makes Yardley, the *Washington Post*'s middlebrow book c ashen with worry:

For lovers of pure prose, [*White Noise* is a trip]: the trouble is that when you step back from it and view it clearly, it proves to be a trip to nowhere yet another of DeLillo's exercises in fiction as political tract . . . irritating and frustrating; he's a writer of prodigious talents, yet he wastes his talents on monotonously apocalyptic novels the essential business of which is to retail the shopworn campus ideology of the '60s and '70s.

Bawer is a more formidable and smarter though no less politically contentious. Back in his heyday, loosing the tight leash of Hilton Kramer, former master at *The New Critic*



had this to say about DeLillo:

these novels are not meant to be life-to-life tales. They are tracts, devised to batter us, again and again, on a single idea: that life in America today is boring, numbing, dehumanized. Not only has the American been robbed of our individuality; our era's despicable technological innovations have afflicted us all with a painful condition known as "sensory overload."

to evoke certain characteristics of a late-twentieth-century Informationland—disassociation, violence, absurdity, and a constant assault on individuality—suggests to such critics a purely political intention, suspiciously leftist tendencies. The mere identification of such characteristics, in effect, as it were, of not ignoring them, stakes one to a singular ideological position. The same basic assumptions permeate much of the political-emburdened, postmodern academic appreciation of DeLillo, for he is ideally attuned to its great dream of using literature politically. DeLillo himself has said that it behooves the artist to stand in permanent opposition to his or her government. He might as well have said the artist opposes all governments, since his or her position is de facto political but its roots and most important intentions remains aesthetic.

Committed artists do not exist on well as members of society, they use too much of their waking hours spent standing adamantly before it, alert to its strange skin, its deep odors, and dangerous physiognomy.

*Underworld* will not calm the anxious critics. As well as being the personal and contemplative of DeLillo's novels, it is also his most political and political, including his account of the life of Lee Harvey Oswald. It begins, as mentioned, with the material from—a long, dazzling fictional re-

counting of the third Giants-Dodgers playoff game on October 3, 1951, the same day that the Soviets conducted their second successful atomic explosion. The game ended with Bobby Thomson's "shot heard round the world" off Dodger Ralph Branca, a three-run homer that snatched defeat from the jaws of victory for the boys of summer. Thomson's home-run ball is grabbed in the stands that afternoon by a young black teenager named Cotter Martin, sold that evening by Martin's father to a white advertising man, and, providing Un-



derworld's delicate narrative line, is exchanged over the next four decades by a host of neglectful owners before it ends up in the hands of Nick Shay, *Underworld's* protagonist.

Shay, a sixteen-year-old, listens to the game by radio from the roof of his building in the Bronx, an anomalous Dodger fan in New York's northern reaches. The ball game, by virtue of its date as well as its drama, makes a perfect launching point for DeLillo's emotional and multilayered return to the Bronx of his youth, as well as for a broad, exploratory fugue on the Cold War and its aftermath—a diagnosis of the psychic and physi-

cal ramifications of America's last fifty years. The entire operation is conducted with the twin, occasionally clashing instruments of memory and fact, wandering through many stories between the early 1950s and the early 1990s. The book flirts with normal narrative construction, falling into and out of obvious story and time lines. It employs an odd structure, or non-structure: prologue, epilogue, and six parts in between, ranging backward from the present to the past with haphazard ease. Each part roughly corresponds to one given period of time, but not always. DeLillo has said that the primary influences on him were the jazz and European films of his youth in the 1950s and early 1960s, and, of all his novels, *Underworld* most tangibly evokes the symbolic, improvisational, *nouvelle vague* experience of that music and those films.

The book's main characters, roughly, are Nick; his younger brother, Matt, who works as an engineer at an atomic-test facility; and Klara Sax, a near-wordless painter who works in a spare room in the Bronx. At seventeen Nick has an affair with Klara, who is married to his brother's science teacher and chess coach, Albert. A secret artist during her Bronx days, decades later she will reach prominence leading a troupe of artists in the painting of a vast field of abandoned B-52s. Shortly after the affair

with Klara, in an act of deeply ironic, William Burroughs-like violence, Nick shoots a man he likes, George the Waiter, after George hands him a gun, smiles enigmatically, and says it isn't loaded. He serves time in an enlightened Jesuit reform school, emerges educated and employable, and finds himself three decades later, in the 1980s, a middle-aged corporate dean of that most contemporary of industries: waste management.

Also in the DeLillo Grounds that October day, according to DeLillo, is a strange party of four: Jackie Gleason, the restaurateur Toots Shor, Frank Sinatra, and J. Edgar Hoover. Gleason



son stuffs himself with food and drink, and the dramatic scene finds him with his head lowered, vomiting across Sinatra's shoes. Short, Sinatra, and Gleason do not appear again in the novel, except in passing references. But Hoover does, in the 1960s, at Truman Capote's Black & White Ball, trembling with repressed sexual and social excitements, his senses assaulted by the moment's decadence, dangers, and humiliations. In DeLillo's hands, Hoover becomes a curiously moving character, all his notorious neuroses, dictatorial paranoid, death fears, and sexual tendencies intact, yet colored by the sadness and dignity of an old and awesomely celibate man of waning power and unabated longing. Earlier, among the great crowd scenes at the historic game, the most stunning remains the moment that finds Hoover isolated, with a color spread of the Bruegel vision from *Life* in his hands, standing thunderstruck amid the delirium of the ninth inning:

... his eyes fall upon the page. It is a color reproduction of a painting crowded with medieval figures who are dying or dead—a landscape of visionary havoc and ruin. . . . Across the red-brown earth, skeleton armies on the march. Men impaled on lances, hung from gibbets, drawn on spoked wheels fixed to the tops of bare trees, bodies open to the crows. Legions of the dead forming up behind shudders made of coffin lids. Death himself astride a slat-ribbed hack, he is peaked for blood, his scythe held ready as he presses people in haunted swarms toward the entrance of some helltrap, an oddly modern construction that could be a subway tunnel or office corridor. A background of ash skies and burning ships. It is clear . . . the page is from *Life* and he tries to work up an anger, he asks himself why a magazine called *Life* . . .

DeLillo is a fan of such telling coincidences and symbols: in the coal-black night, when a man hits a ball into the sky is turning to ash over the field after a seven-turn atoll, (the grounds),

floats into view. Someone tears it free and tosses it down into a crowd of thousands, a random gesture in life but in fiction one imbued with symbolic repercussions. Such are the ingenious ways DeLillo has always found in his work to show the shape of the hills toward which mortal creation tends—a landscape, as DeLillo so succinctly puts it, “of visionary havoc and ruin.” This sensibility makes him not doctrinally but aesthetically a Catholic writer, and the subdued religious sentiment that runs through all his work has never been more evident than in *Underworld*. He has an unerring touch with what John Cheever once called “the sense of moral judgments embodied in a migratory vastness.”

*Underworld* moves from the game into modern America, into Nick Shay's world of jargon and managed toxicity, his cooling marriage, the Thomson home-run ball nestled on his bedroom bookshelf. Cutting in, like flashbacks, are Cotter Martin and his father, and the long, fragmentary, not-quite-recoverable provenance of the ball's ownership. Slowly the narrative recedes backward into Klara Sax's New York life as an emerging artist in the 1970s, into Nick's and Matt's difficult relationship, and backward again into the Bronx of each character's unknowing youth. The prose is both penetrating and beautiful, bawdy and theological. DeLillo intersperses other stories, minor chords giving resonance to the major themes: a homeless girl in a ravaged Bronx lot, graffiti artists working silent midnights in the train yards, and everywhere garbage, waste, refuse, and memory.

With all this, the most telling section of *Underworld*, Part 5, almost drops the story line altogether. Entitled “Better Things for Better Living Through Chemistry: Selected Fragments Public and Private in the 1950s and 1960s,” this section passes from one fragmentary routine to the next, encompassing the novel's disparate themes of memory, history, fear of death, and death itself. Here fans of DeLillo will find him at his purest, as the shtickmeister, mimic, and imaginative archivist, doing bits, some of them very funny, on history:

fictional scenes from the civil-movement, from the east-seaboard blackout of 1965, from the nuclear zone, with a series of inspired renditions of Lenny running throughout. This fictional Bruce monologue, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, resonates with one of *Underworld*'s most insistent themes, the mysteries of the quotidian:

“The Navy boarded a ship yesterday at the quarantine line. First ship. Armed boarding party. Bet you it was tense, baby. Turns out they were not carrying missiles. Carrying parts and toilet paper. See, that's ordinary life trying to reassert itself. That's the secret meaning of this. The secret history that never appears in the written accounts of the time. . . . And you cops on speed. The linguists in the crowd. . . . something you oughta know. The smack, or heroin? Comes from the dish *shmek*. . . . A sniff, a smell, pinch of snuff. . . . Next time you see a junkie who's a coreligionist . . . a stick your rubber glove up his nose and check what kind of stash he's got there, that smell you smell is *shmek* friend. Which is just another name for ordinary life.”

Another of the recurrent criticisms leveled at DeLillo is that his central characters lack the depth of emotional contours we now associate with passably realistic fiction; that his characters talk alike, that their language and the language of the people's voices are not sufficiently differentiated. The point such critics miss is that DeLillo's books are purposely suffused with the language of the culture, the jargons and clichés of the public discourse of our time, snatches caught in supermarket aisles and on talk shows, the overpopulated, declamatory voice of the marketplace of television, of business meetings, of the financial pages. His characters live in these worlds, and he lets his own sentences blend into their environments. He aims for a total immersion in the clatter of almost-sensible English, people talking over one another, lone soul rant. This is DeLillo's music, the



thms of everyday, intimate con-  
 al, truncated speech—a fasci-  
 that reaches symphonic levels  
*derworld*. Perhaps his charac-  
 ound alike to some because his  
 sts run toward figures driven by  
 syncopated obsessions, fears,  
 eeds; iconic characters that  
 in a twelve-tone relationship  
 culture of image and longing in  
 ne and this place. As such, they  
 ce a certain kind of language, a  
 n kind of thought process that  
 ight bears some relation to De-  
 own. DeLillo's world and lan-  
 stand out from those of other  
 s because they are unnerving,  
 ctive, slightly edgy and hostile,  
 ar and deeply strange at the  
 ime. You would never expect  
 Shay, an Arizona executive, to  
 and speak as he does, yet it is  
 possible to believe in him ably.  
 ly. With his disappearing fa-  
 is transformation to suburban  
 can from Bronx youth, his sub-  
 n to an ordered life as husband,  
 corporate executive, he be-  
 a kind of machine for the proc-  
 of what's around him, as is the  
 ny he works for.

l that's the final and all-impor-  
 eaning of the title *Underworld*.  
 o want us to see the things be-  
 our eyes, right on the surface  
 low the fantasies we insist on  
 g at, ordinary life as it has ex-  
 itself among the people of a  
 involved in a prolonged tech-  
 cal fantasy war, a fifty-year  
 of theater at the end of the  
 eth century, played out in the  
 of strategic nuclear weapons  
 machines of despoilment.

arked willingness to tread  
 torical territory, a tendency  
 to the composition and expe-  
 of *Libra* and *Mao II*, DeLillo's  
 o books, remains much in evi-  
 n *Underworld*. We don't have  
 over but other people, other  
 and other works of art as well,  
 semi-real, some real, most  
 ly real but not. Most striking  
 these last is an extended, hal-  
 ory description of a fictional,  
 ergei Eisenstein film that nev-  
 and never could have been:  
 ith grotesque human figures

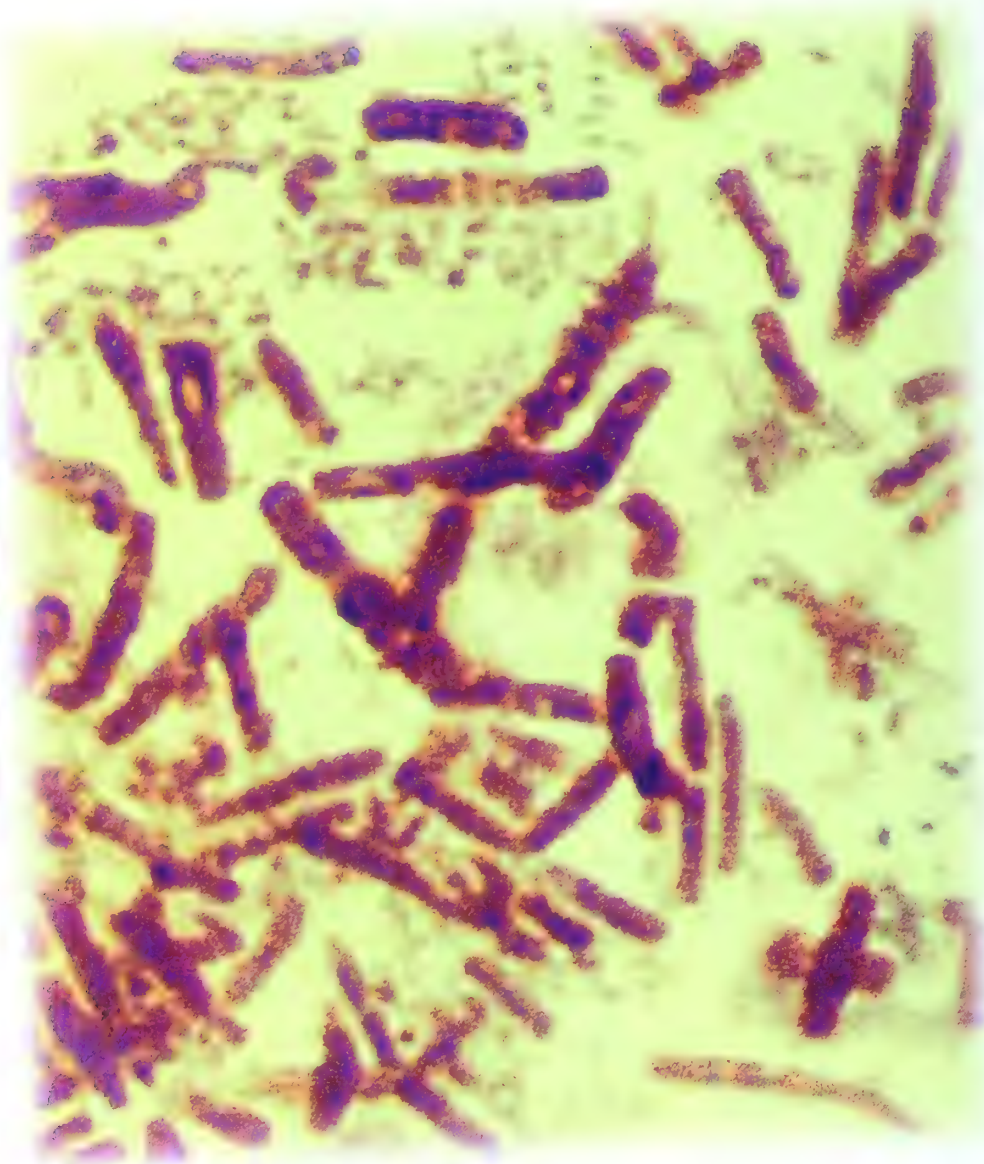
forced to wander across an apoc-  
 rypal landscape, it raises to visual-  
 mythic scale DeLillo's deep sense of  
 torture, rejection, and death. Its title,  
 in one of the many circling "coinci-  
 dences" that fuel *Underworld*, is *Un-  
 terwelt*. For DeLillo, the title has  
 many functions. It describes Nick  
 Shay's world of waste management.  
 It describes many of the other main  
 figures of the book: the marginal, the  
 criminal, the impoverished, as well as  
 those who traffic in the somewhat-  
 below-the-surface world of politics or  
 consciousness, like Klara Sax or  
 J. Edgar Hoover or Lenny Bruce. It  
 describes the world of the under-  
 ground nuclear-testing facilities that  
 appear as regularly as Burma-Shave  
 signs along the road of the text. And  
 it stands finally and comprehensively  
 for the world of death and the dead,  
 the original underworld, the "hell-  
 trap" in the Bruegel painting, "an  
 oddly modern construction that  
 could be a subway tunnel or office  
 corridor." Flannery O'Connor once  
 replied, when asked why she wrote so  
 much about the poor, that "every-  
 body, as far as I am concerned, is The  
 Poor." For DeLillo we are all The  
 Dead or The Dying: death and dying  
 are the dramatic points of everyday  
 life, of putting clothes in the wash  
 and turning off the overhead light in  
 favor of the bedside lamp. No surface  
 reality is explainable or even worth  
 talking about without delving into  
 the reality of that waiting  
 world below.

**T**he temptation will remain for  
 the anti- and pro-DeLillo camps to  
 read explicit political messages into  
 his newest, largest, and best work. But  
 a strong difference exists between  
 writers with overarching political in-  
 tention and those whose work is driv-  
 en by a truly historical imagination.  
 The latter group comprises the far  
 greater artists—Shakespeare wrote in  
 that way, as did Milton, Blake,  
 Flaubert, George Eliot, Henry James,  
 T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and, perhaps  
 most relevant in discussing DeLillo,  
 Samuel Beckett and Joseph Conrad.  
 This capacity to imagine the world in  
 a woven language of the personal and  
 intimate as well as the social, politi-  
 cal, and historical—to give each its

own reality as well as to enable each  
 to function as a metaphor for the oth-  
 er—has been the highest measure of  
 literary art in English. DeLillo has  
 been able to do this with uncanny  
 force; the fusion of the personal with  
 the historical is, finally, the point of  
 his fiction. *Underworld* is a giant fres-  
 co of scenes with such an effect: Matt  
 Shay's odd desire to drive his girl-  
 friend across the Bergmanesque  
 emptiness of a proving ground;  
 J. Edgar Hoover positioning his mir-  
 ror in hotel rooms to catch glimpses  
 of his beloved assistant, Clyde Tol-  
 son, passing in the next room; or, in  
 one of the final scenes of the novel,  
 Nick Shay and a colleague on an ex-  
 Soviet cargo plane to Kazakhstan,  
 where a Russian start-up company  
 will demonstrate the benefits of va-  
 porizing the world's waste in under-  
 ground nuclear-detonation sites.

*Underworld* confirms that contem-  
 porary American fiction's most prom-  
 ising movement involves novels on a  
 large social and historical scale that  
 stretch the norms of narrative and lan-  
 guage. William Gaddis, Thomas Pyn-  
 chon, Joan Didion, and DeLillo are  
 the leading novelists, the parents of  
 the movement (all of them either af-  
 fected by or at least best viewed in the  
 context of the late William Bur-  
 roughs), and among them all, DeLillo  
 is the shrewdest observer of his neigh-  
 bors and the purest and most native  
 prose stylist. His unsparing account-  
 ing of our lives—not someone else's,  
 not the doings of special characters  
 caught up in unusual dramas, but us—  
 explains why his work often faces  
 grudging respect or outright resistance.  
 It is too frightening, too demanding,  
 too true. It is visionary and prophetic  
 at times, and, in that biblical sense,  
 religious. It demands that its reader  
 look at the world, at least during the  
 interlude of engagement, in these same  
 demanding ways. And this is too much.  
 Especially now, especially in an age  
 that worships power, that congrat-  
 ulates itself for victories that are only  
 apocalypse in disguise, that ships its  
 waste in the dark of night to poorer  
 continents, making a charity out of  
 poison. This is the world below, some-  
 body else's world, not ours, for our best  
 and most stubborn illusion is that we  
 have invented heaven.







**Our culture is obsessed with waste.** The culture we speak of is not ours.

It's not our company culture, but a useful little culture of bacteria and fungi. These voracious bugs clean up oily waste through a process called bioremediation. We've been using it in many places. Truthfully, nature has always degraded substances this way. We just speed the process and make it more efficient. We combine

air, water, a bulking agent like straw, fertilizer to nourish 'native' bacteria, and oily waste. After turning and mixing, the microbes eat the oil and leave behind rich compost.

In nature, this process may take years or even decades. By optimizing environmental conditions for the microbes and revving up their metabolisms, it can take only a couple of months. What's left is a topsoil mixture we've safely used for revegetation of old oil and gas well sites. It's true that oil exploration can sometimes result in undesirable by-products and the need for site reclamation. By enlisting

nature's help, we're solving both problems. And while cleaning up after ourselves is often required by law, we've always felt that it makes good business sense. If we can do it within the natural order of things, then to us that makes the most sense of all.

*Oily sludge was transformed into plantable compost that was spread around an old drilling site, then contoured to match the landscape. We planted a mix of Sand Love Grass and Little Blue Stem. Not only did it thrive, but the area became a habitat for wildlife.*



People Do.



# UNMASKING THE

A secret federal surveillance tribunal

A fundamental way the judiciary guarantees that it is properly balancing individual rights against the needs of the state is by making its proceedings public. But deep inside the Justice Department is a secret tribunal that operates under a very different set of rules: the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which decides whether intelligence agencies can wiretap or search the houses of suspected spies. The only journalist ever allowed access to the court's chambers, I passed through an electronic door that renders the room completely bug-proof. Security precautions are not only physical; the court has an extraordinarily thin public paper trail. The court has never denied any of the roughly 10,000 surveillance applications brought by intelligence agencies, and none of those applications has ever been declassified.

One of the few clues to the court's activities are these recently declassified "minimization procedures," steps agents must follow to prevent the court-authorized surveillance from unduly jeopardizing Americans' privacy rights. Before the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978, the FBI regularly conducted national-security surveillance against Americans without first getting a court order and, under the infamous COINTELPRO operation, infiltrated and disrupted leftist and civil-rights groups it deemed subversive. Once these abuses became known, Congress created the FISA court to inject a measure of judicial protection into such surveillance. Intelligence agencies must apply to the court for permission to watch suspected spies and terrorists, and one of the seven federal judges appointed to the FISA court by the chief justice of the Supreme Court reviews the request in the court's highly secure environment. But does the court—with its nonadversarial process, extraordinary power, and secrecy—threaten the very rights it is supposed to safeguard?

The vast majority of FISA applications are uncontroversial—requests to snoop on foreign embassies and dignitaries. But when agents seek to spy on citizens or resident aliens, unique civil-liberties questions are raised, because FISA applications are granted under lower standards than normal criminal search warrants. FISA requires only that the government show probable cause that the target is "an agent of a foreign power" engaged in covert activities within the U.S.—a nebulous definition. And unlike normal warrants, FISA doesn't require that targets ever be informed of the surveillance, abrogating their hopes of redress. Civil libertarians fear these lesser standards are used to harass those with unpopular politics, such as eight immigrants targeted under FISA for raising money and speaking for a Marxist PLO faction—activities protected under the First Amendment. Citing a McCarthy-era law, the INS arrested and tried to deport the so-called L.A. Eight for espousing "world communism" yet refused to let them review the FISA evidence. An appeals court ruled that using secret evidence violated due process.

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION  
OF THE UNITED STATES FOR AN ORDER  
AUTHORIZING ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE  
OF A UNITED STATES PERSON AGENT  
OF A FOREIGN POWER. (S)

STANDARD MINIMIZATION  
Pursuant to § 101(h) of the  
Surveillance Act of 1978, the fol-  
lowing procedures have been  
adopted by the Attorney General,  
Federal Bureau of Investigation,  
for the minimization of electronic  
surveillance as ordered.

#### Section 1 - Application

These procedures apply to the  
dissemination of nonpublicly avail-  
able information concerning unconsent-  
ed surveillance of a United States  
person.

These procedures apply to the  
dissemination of nonpublicly avail-  
able information concerning unconsent-  
ed surveillance of a United States  
person.

Classified by: [redacted]  
Operations, Office of  
Review, U.S. Department of  
Justice  
Declassify on: [redacted]

With [redacted] at the Justice Department for Legal Times, he has written extensively about the FISA court. This document was classified and released to Legal Times under a Freedom of Information Act request.



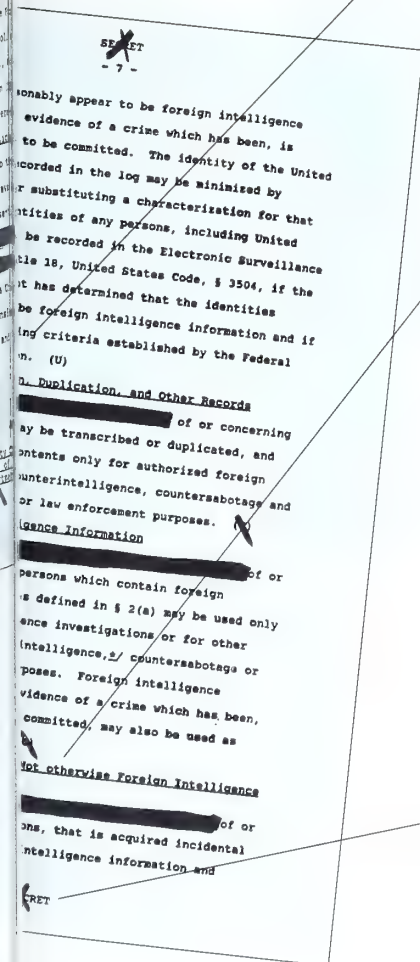
# T OF NO APPEAL

the Bill of Rights, by Benjamin Wittes

Intelligence agents must erase conversations recorded during FISA surveillance unless they contain real counterintelligence information. That's just one of the many civil-liberties protections built into FISA, say Justice Department officials, who claim that their perfect win-loss ratio is due to rigorous internal review that leaves FISA judges no cause to turn down the applications. (Thus the FISA appellate court has never been called to duty.) Each application, moreover, requires the signature of either the attorney general or her deputy, and this ensures political accountability. But is FISA being used as a back door for surveillance in cases, such as that of the L.A. Eight, where the government lacks the evidence to get a normal search warrant?

Still more disturbing is that although FISA applications are granted under a lower standard than criminal warrants, the fruits of FISA searches can nonetheless be introduced into criminal cases. As long as the primary purpose of the surveillance is counterintelligence, not fighting crime, intelligence agencies can pass along evidence of crimes to law-enforcement agencies, which can present it in criminal court. (When FBI agents using FISA-authorized surveillance heard a suspected operative of the Arab terrorist group Abu Nidal stab his daughter to death for threatening to run away, for example, they passed the recording on to surprised Missouri prosecutors.) This might sound like a violation of the Fourth Amendment, but it's probably constitutional. The Supreme Court has never ruled on FISA, but several lower courts have, and none has ever found it invalid. The courts are deferential to the executive branch in national-security matters, and that is unlikely to change.

The public, too, generally approves of whatever means it takes to stop espionage, and the handful of known FISA targets aren't very sympathetic characters. But what about the other targets? Despite the end of the Cold War, the court has granted a greater number of warrants each year—a whopping 839 in 1996, far more than the average annual number of federal criminal wiretap warrants. The court's power has grown, too. Until 1994, it only granted wiretaps; physical searches required agencies to apply for warrants through normal channels. Then came the case of CIA double agent Aldrich Ames. The FISA court had approved electronic surveillance of Ames, but Janet Reno allowed the FBI to search his house without a warrant. Seeking reduced charges for his wife, Ames never challenged the search, but the snafu prompted an expansion of the FISA court's power to grant physical searches. Counterterrorism laws passed last year created a related court that makes it easier to deport FISA targets such as the L.A. Eight. The government assures us that the FISA court is a check on—not a return to—COINTELPRO-era tactics. Given the growing number of classified applications, however, there is reason to fear that history could repeat itself.





# THE HOUSE GUN

By Nadine Gordimer

**S**omething terrible happened.

They are watching it on the screen with their after-dinner coffee cups beside them. It is Bosnia or Somalia or the earthquake shaking a Japanese island between apocalyptic teeth like a dog; whatever were the disasters of that time. When the intercom buzzes each looks to the other with a friendly reluctance; you go, your turn. It's part of the covenant of living together. They made the decision to give up the house and move into this townhouse complex with grounds maintained and security-monitored entrance only recently and they are not yet accustomed, or rather are inclined momentarily to forget that it's not the barking of Robbie and the old-fangled ring of the front door bell that summons them, now. No pets allowed in the complex, but luckily there was the solution that theirs could go to their son who has a garden cottage.

He, she—twitch of a smile, he got himself up with languor directed at her and went to lift the nearest receiver. Who, she half-heard him say, half-listening to the commentary following the images, Who. It could be someone wanting to convert to some religious sect, or the delivery of a summons for a parking offence, casu-

al workers did this, moon-lighting. He said something else she didn't catch but she heard the purr of the electronic release button.

What he said then was, Do you know who a Julian-somebody might be? Friend of Duncan?

He, she—they didn't, either of them. Nothing unusual about that, Duncan, twenty-seven years old, had his own circle just as his parents had theirs, and these intersected only occasionally where interests, inculcated in him as a child by his parents, met.

What does he want?

Just said to speak to us.

Both at the same instant were touched by a live voltage of alarm. What is there to fear, defined in the known context of a twenty-seven-year-old in this city—a car crash, a street mugging, a violent break-in at the cottage. Both stood at the door, confronting these, confronting the footsteps they heard approaching their private paved path beneath the crossed swords of Strelitzia leaves, the signal of the second buzzer, and this young man, come from? for? Duncan. He stared at the floor as he came in, so they couldn't read him. He sat down without a word.

He, she—whose turn.

There's been an accident?

She's a doctor, she sees what the ambulances bring in to Intensive Care. If something's broken she can gauge whether it ever can be put together again.

This Julian draws in his lip, his teeth and clamps his mouth in that moment.

A kind of . . . Not Duncan, is it? Someone's been shot. He's an old friend of Duncan.

They both stand up.

For God's sake—what are they talking about—what is all this—arrested, arrested for what—

The messenger is attacked, comes almost sullen, unable to tell what he has to tell. The obvious word comes ashamedly from his mouth: Murder.

Everything has come to a head. What can be understood is a crash, a street mugging, a violent break-in.

He/she. He strides over, switches off the television. And he takes a violent breath. So long as nobody moved, nobody uttered a word and the act within the house could not enter here. Now with the touch of a switch and the gust of a new breath a new calendar is opened. The old Gregorian cannot reach this day. It does not exist in the means of measure.

This Julian now tells them that the magistrate was called 'after the event' (he gives the detail with the weight of its urgent gravity) to lay a charge at the police station and bail was refused. That is the practical point of his visit: Duncan says, Duncan says, Duncan's message is that there is no point in their coming, their

*Nadine Gordimer is a Nobel Prize-winning author of twenty-one books. Her latest novel will be published in January by Pantheon, Straus and Giroux.*



in trying for bail, he will appear in court on Monday morning: his own lawyer.

She has marked the date of their son's prescriptions a dozen times since morning but she turns up with a question that will bring a kind of answer to that word uttered by the messenger. She sits at.

What day is it today?

Friday.

It was on a Friday.

It is probable that neither of the boys had ever been in a court.

During the forty hours of the week—waiting they had never every explanation possible in the absence of being able to talk to their son, himself. One of the preposterous of the charge they had to respect his position that they not know him; this must indicate that the whole business was ridiculous, that's probably ridiculous, his ridiculous affair, soon resolved, better not the confirmation of taken in alarm by his mother and father arriving in prison accompanied by his lawyer, states of motion etc. That the way they brought themselves to read his opinion; a mixture of consideration for

—no need to be mixed up in business—and the independence of young he had been granted asserted in mutual understanding he was an adolescent. Dread attends the unknown. There was a drug that came to them not out of something administered from her pharmacopoeia; they walked without anything to tell one another along the corridors of the courts, Harald standing with his wife Claudia with the presence of a stranger as they found that door, entered and shuffled awkwardly sideways to be seated on benches.

The very smell of the place was that of a foreign country to which they were deported. The odor of polished wooden barriers and waxed floor. The windows above head height, sloping down searchlights. The uniforms occupied by men with the impersonality of cult members, all interchangeable. The presence of a few figures seated somewhere near, the kind who stare from park benches or lie face down in public gardens. The mind dashes from what confronts it, as a bird that has flown into a confined space does, there must be an opening. Harald collided against



the awareness of school, too far back to be consciously remembered; institutional smell and hard wood under his buttocks. Even the name of a master was blundered into; nothing from the past could be more remote than this present. In a flick of attention he saw Claudia rouse from her immobility to disconnect the beeper that kept her in touch with her surgery. She felt the distraction and turned her head to read his oblique glance: nothing. She gave the stiff smile with which one greets somebody one isn't sure one knows.

He comes up from the well of a stairway between two policemen.

Duncan. Can it be? He has to be recognized in a persona that doesn't belong to him, as they know him, have always known him—and who could identify him better? He is wearing black jeans and a black cotton T-shirt. The kind of clothes he customarily wears, but the neat collar of a white shirt is turned down outside the neck of the T-shirt. They both notice this, it's an unspoken focus of attention between them; this is the detail, token submission to the conventions expected by a court, that makes the connection of reality between the one they knew, *him*, and this other, flanked by policemen.

A blast of heat came over Harald, confusion like anxiety or anger, but neither. Some reaction that never before has had occasion to be called up.

Duncan, yes. He looked at them, acknowledging himself. Claudia smiled at him with lifted head, for everyone to see. And he inclined his head to her. But he did not look at his parents directly again during the proceedings that followed, except as his controlled, almost musing glance swept over them as it went round the public gallery across the two young black men with their legs sprawled relaxedly before them, the old white man sitting forward with his head in his hands, and the

family group, probably wandered in bewildered to pass the time before a case that concerned them came up, who were whispering among themselves of their own affairs.

The magistrate made his stage entrance, everyone fidgeted to their feet, sank again. He was tall or short, bald or not—doesn't matter, there was the hitch of shoulders under the voluminous gown and, his hunch lowered over papers presented to him, he made a few brief comments in the tone of questions addressed to the tables in the well of the court where the backs of what presumably were the prosecutor and



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the lawyer presented themselves in the gallery. Under the ladders of the court, policemen on either side came in and out conferring in low whispers, the rote of proceedings concluded. The case was referred to a date two weeks later. A date for application for bail had been set.

But beginning. The parents crossed the barrier between the courtroom and the well of the court and were not prevented from contact with their son. Each embraced him and he kept his head turned from the cameras.

Do you need anything?  
Just not on, the young lawyer was saying, I'm serving notice to you of the refusal, right now, Duncan won't let the prosecutor get his hands on it. Don't worry.

He had said to her, the doctor, in exactly the tone of reassurance that a mother would use with patients when she gave a prognosis she herself was sure of.

His son had an air of impatience, a shifting gaze of one who wished to be meaning to leave; an urgent air of some preoccupation, busied with himself. They could read it in his confidence; of his innocence—of course; or it could be a fear or dread, akin to the dread he had felt, concealing his dread of pride, not wanting to be associated with theirs. He was now officially accused, on record as such. Officially accused has a status of dread of his own, hasn't he!

Nothing?  
See to everything Duncan—the lawyer squeezed his shoulder as he swung a briefcase and was off.

There was nothing, then...  
Nothing. Nothing they could ask, but it is all about, what is it you are supposed to have done?  
The father took courage: Is he really a competent lawyer? We could get someone else. Anyone.

Good friend.  
Get in touch with him later, find out what happened when he saw the prosecutor.

His son will know that his father has money, he'll be ready to supply for the contingency that it

is impossible to believe has arisen between them, money for bail.

He turns away—the prisoner, that's what he is now—in anticipation of the policemen's move to order him to, he doesn't want them to touch him, he has his own volition, and his mother's clasp just catches the ends of his fingers as he goes.

They see him led down the stairwell to whatever is there beneath the court. As they make to leave Court B17 they become aware that the other friend, the messenger Julian, has been standing just behind them to assure Duncan of his presence but not wanting to intrude upon those with the closest claims. They greet him and walk out together with him but do not speak. He feels guilty about his mission, that night, and hurries ahead.

As the couple emerge into the foyer of the courts, vast and lofty cathedral echoing with the susurration of its different kind of supplicants gathered there, Claudia suddenly breaks away, disappearing toward the sign indicating toilets. Harald waits for her among these people patient in trouble, no choice to be otherwise, for them, he is one of them, the wives, husbands, father, lovers, children of forgers, thieves and murderers. He looks at his watch. The whole process has taken exactly one hour and seven minutes.

She returns and they quit the place.

Let's have a coffee somewhere.

Oh... there are patients at the surgery, expecting me.

Let them wait.

She did not have time to get to the lavatory and vomited in the washroom basin. There was no warning; trooping out with all those other people in trouble, part of the anxious and stunned gait, she suddenly felt the clenching of her insides and knew what was going to come. She did not tell him, when she rejoined him, and he must have assumed she had gone to the place for the usual purpose. Medically, there was an explanation for such an attack coming on without nausea. Extreme tension could trigger the seizure of muscles. 'Vomited her heart out': that was the

expression some of her patients used when describing the symptom. She had always received it, drily, as dramatically inaccurate.

Let them wait.

What he was saying was to hell with them, the patients, how can their pains and aches and pregnancies compare with this? Everything came to a stop, that night; everything has come to a stop. In the coffee bar an androgynous waiter with long curly hair tied back and tennis-ball biceps hummed his pleasure along with piped music. In the mortuary there was lying the body of a man. They ordered a filter coffee (Harald) and a cappuccino (Claudia). The man who was shot in the head, found dead. Why should it be unexpected that it was a man? Was not that a kind of admittance, already, credence that it could have been done at all? To assume the body would represent a woman, the most common form of the act, a *crime passionnel* from the sensational pages of the Sunday papers, was to accept the possibility that it was committed, entered at all into a life's context. His. The random violence of night streets they had expected to read in the stranger's face of the messenger, this was the hazard that belongs there, along with the given eternal, the risks of illness, failure of ambition, loss of love. These are what those responsible for an existence recognize they expose it to. To kill a woman out of jealous passion; for it to come to mind—shamefully, in acceptance of newspaper banality—was to allow even that the very nature of such acts could breach the prescribed limits of that life's context.

We're not much the wiser.

She didn't answer. Her eyebrows lifted as she reached for the packets of sugar. Her hand was trembling slightly, privately, from the recent violent convulsion of her body. If he noticed he did not remark upon it.

They now understood what they had expected from him: outrage at the preposterous—thing—accusation, laid upon him. Against his presence there between two policemen before a magistrate. They had expected to have him burst forth at the sight of them—that was what



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they were ready for, to tell what? Whatever he could, the restriction of that room with policemen hovering and the scratching papers together a gallery hangers-on dawdling. That his being there was cramping would get him out immediately portune officials, protest—what? Tell them. Some explanation. How could it be thought that situation was possible.

A good friend.

The lawyer a good friend that was all. His back as he went down the stairs, a policeman on either side. Now, while he stretched a leg so that he could reach coins in his pocket, he was confined they had never seen, The body of a man was in a way. Harald left a tip for the man who was humming. The rituals of living are a daze of nuity over what has come to a

I'll insist on getting to the bottom of it this afternoon.

They were walking to the top through the continuum of the separated and brought side by side again by the narrowing and widening of the pavements in relation to other people going about their the vendors' spread stock of pyramids of vegetables, chewing gum, sunglasses and second-hand clothes, the gas burners on the sausages like curls of a man gut were frying.

In the afternoon she could not wait. It was the day around for her weekly stint at a Doctors like herself, in private practice, were expected to meet them in areas of the city and the once teel white suburbs of the old where in recent years there was influx, a great rise in and variation the population. She had regularly fulfilled this obligation; now conscientiousness goaded her, over had come to a stop; she went to the clinic instead of accompanying a friend to the lawyer. Perhaps this was to keep herself to the convention that what had happened could not be? It was not a day to examine; just follow the sequence out in an appointments register.

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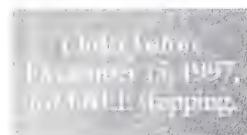
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self, somewhere. Christianity medicine science cannot explain, the self is responsible. But this—the bullet: the pure assault of pain.

The purpose of a doctor's life is to defend the body against the violence of pain. She stands on the other side of the divide from those who cause it. The divide of the ultimate, between death and life.

This body whose interior she is exploring with a plastic-gloved hand like a diviner's instinctively led to a hidden water-source, has a foetus, three months of life inside it.

I'm telling you true. I was never so sick with the others. Every morning, sick as a dog.

Vomit your heart out.

D'you think that means it's a boy, doctor? The patient has the mock coyness women often affect towards a doctor, the consulting room is their stage with a rare chance for a little performance. Ag, my husband'd be over the moon. But I tell him, if we don't come through with it right this time, I don't know about you, I'm giving up.

The doctor obliges by laughing with her.

We could do a simple test if you want to know the sex.

Oh no, it's God's will.

Next come a succession of the usual heart ailments and bronchial infections. Life staggers along powered by worn bellows of old people's lungs and softly pulses visibly between the ribs of a skinny small boy. Some who turn up this week as every week have eyes narrowed by the gross fatty tissue of their faces and others continue to present the skin infections characteristic of malnutrition. They eat too much or they have too little to eat. It's comparatively easy to prescribe for the first because they have the remedy in themselves. For the second, what is prescribed is denied them by circumstances outside their control. Green vegetables and fresh fruit—they are too poor for the luxury of these remedies, what they have come to the clinic for is a bottle of medicine. The doctor knows this but she has ready a supply of diet sheets which propose meals made with various pulses as some sort of substitute for what they should be able to eat.

She hands a sheet encouragingly to the woman who has brought her two grandchildren to the doctor. Their scarred gray-filmed legs are bare but despite the heat they watch the doctor from under thick woolen caps that cover the sores on their heads and come down right to the eyebrows. The woman doesn't need the nurse to interpret, she can read the sheet and studies it slowly at arm's length in the manner of aging people becoming farsighted. She folds it carefully. Her time is up. She shepherds the children to the door. She thanks the doctor. I don't know what I can get. Maybe I can try buy some these things. The father, he's still in jail. My son.

**C**harge sheet. Indictment. Harald kept himself at a remove of cold attention in order to separate what was evidence against interpretation of that evidence. Circumstantial: that day, that night, Friday, 19th January, 1996, a man was found dead in a house he shared with two other men. David Baker and Nkululeko "Khulu" Dladla came home at 7:15 P.M. and found the body of their friend Carl Jespersen in the living-room. He had a bullet wound in the head. He was lying half-on, half-off the sofa, as if (interpretation) he had been taken by surprise when shot and had tried to rise. He was wearing thonged sandals, one of which was twisted, hanging off his foot, and beneath a towelling dressing-gown he was naked. There were glasses on an African drum beside the sofa. One held the dregs of what appeared to have been a mixture known as a Bloody Mary—an empty tin of tomato juice and a bottle of vodka were on top of the television set. The other glasses were apparently unused; there was an unopened bottle of whisky and a bucket of half-melted ice on a tray on the floor beside the drum. (Evidence combined with interpretation.) There was no unusual disorder in the room; this is a casual bachelor household. (Interpretation.) The room was in darkness except for the pin-point light of the CD player that had come to the end of a disc and not been switched off. The front door was locked but

glass doors which led from the room to the garden were open. They generally would be in summer even after dark.

The garden is one in which a cottage is sited. The cottage is occupied by Duncan Lindgard, a mutual of the dead man and the two men discovered him, and they ran after they had discovered Jespersen's body. Lindgard's dog was asleep beside the cottage and apparently was no-one at home. The police arrived about twenty minutes later. A plumber's assistant, Petrus Ntuli occupied an outhouse on the property in exchange for work in the den, was questioned and said he had seen Lindgard come out on a randah of the house and drop something as he crossed the garden to the cottage. Ntuli thought he would retrieve whatever it was, for Lindgard but could not find anything. He went out to Lindgard but Lindgard had already entered the cottage. Ntuli did not have a watch. He could not say what time this was, but the sun was down. The police searched the den and found a gun in a chest of drawers. Baker and Dladla immediately identified it as the gun kept in the house as mutual protection against burglars; neither could recall any of their three names it was likely. The police proceeded to the cottage. There was no response to knocking on the door, but Ntuli insisted Lindgard was inside. The police effected entry by forcing the kitchen door and found that Lindgard was in the bedroom. He seemed dazed, said he had been asleep. Lindgard whether he knew his friend Carl Jespersen had been attacked, he was white in the face (interpretation demanded, Is he dead?)

He then protested about the police invasion of his cottage and insisted that he be allowed to make several telephone calls, one of which was to his lawyer. The lawyer eventually advised him not to resist and met him at the police station where fingerprint tests were inconclusive because the chest of drawers had been watered recently. The fingerprints on the gun were largely obliterated by mud.

This is not a detective story.



ld has to believe that the events that genre represents ity.

is the sequence of actions by charge of murder is arrived en he recounts to Claudia e heard from the lawyer she er head from side to side at ge of detail and does not in- He has the impression she is him out; yet when he has fin- he says nothing. He sees, from ence, he has said nothing; back nothing that would ex- Duncan came out of that ouse and dropped something arden on his way back to his . A gun was found. Duncan was asleep and did not hear is friends or the police when ocked at the door. None of ls anything more, gives any explanation than there was in ifrontation across the barrier . His brief embrace with head away. His reply to any need: g. Harald sees, informed by 's presence, that what he has to himself and her, is indeed whodunnit.

application by the good cocksure lawyer had been refused.

why? Why? All she can call to some unquestioned accepted ng that one who is likely to another crime cannot be let n the mere security of money. n, a danger to society! For ake, why?

prosecutor's got wind of some at he might disappear—leave. country?

they are in the category of ho buy themselves out of ret- n because they can afford to bail and then estreat. He did ow whether she understood plication of refusal, for their d themselves.

re does the idea come from? girl's been called for ques- g, apparently she said he's reatening to take up a posi- 's been offered with a practice apore. I don't know—to get om her, it sounds like. Some- he let slip, maybe intentional- o can fathom what was going veen them.

If Claudia is dissatisfied with what little Harald has learned in explanation, could she have been more successful? Well, let her try, then.

An awaiting-trial prisoner has the right to visits. Her turn: I'd like to talk to that Julian whatever-his-name, before we go.

Harald knows that both have an irrational revulsion against contact with the young man: don't kill the messenger, the threat is the message.

Claudia is not the only woman with a son in prison. Since this afternoon she has understood that. She is no longer the one who doles out comfort or its placebos for others' disasters, herself safe, untouchable, in another class. And it's not the just laws that have brought about this form of equality; something quite other. There's no sentimentality in this, either, which is why she will not speak of it to anyone, not even to the one who is the father of a son in prison; it might be misinterpreted.

She telephoned the lawyer to obtain the number of the messenger who had presented himself at the townhouse security gate and entered at the hour of after-dinner coffee. She was adamant, Harald could hear as she reached the messenger, that he should come back that evening. Not tomorrow. Now.

**T**his time when he opened the door to the messenger, Harald offered his hand to him: Julian Verster. Claudia had noted down the name.

How did they seem to him? The occasion had no precedent to go by; a social occasion, an inquisition, an appeal—what kind of hospitality is this, what signifying arrangements are appropriate, as the provision of tea or drinks set out, the placing of ashtrays and arrangement of a comfortable chair signify the nature of other occasions. Everything in its customary place in the room; that in itself inappropriate, even bizarre.

Their attitude towards him had changed, overcome by need. They saw in this young man the possibility of some answers, they might read even in his appearance something of the context in which what had happened could happen. Everyone wears

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the uniform of how he sees himself or how he disguises himself. Bulky running shoes with intricate embellishments, high tongues and thick soles, that cabinet ministers as well as clerks and students wear now, and Harald himself, at leisure, wears; pitted skin on the cheeks, the tribal marks of adolescent acne, wide-spaced dog's-brown eyes darkened by heavy eyebrows authoritatively contradicting the uncertainties of a mouth that moves, shaping and reshaping itself before he speaks. A face that suggests a personality subservient and loyal: an ideal component of a coterie. In business, Harald is accustomed to being observant of such things when meeting prospective associates.

—I'm sorry to have interrupted your plans for the evening, like this, but when you came that night we were all . . . I don't know . . . we couldn't say much. It was difficult to take in anything. As Duncan's friend, you must have felt something the same—it must have been hard for you to have to come to us. We know that.—

The young man acknowledges with an understanding downturn of the lips that this is, in turn, her way of extending a hand to him.

—I felt awful—that I did it so badly—I couldn't think of any other way. Awful. And he'd asked me, he left it to me.—

They sat in a close group now. Claudia was turned to him, sharing the sofa, and Harald drew up a chair, to speak.

—Why didn't he call us himself.—

But it was a judgment rather than a question.

—Oh Harald . . . that's obvious.—

—He was terribly shocked, you can't imagine.—

—That was at the police station?—

—No, the house, he reached me on my cell phone and I just turned round in the middle of the road, where I was . . . he was still with the police at the house, the cottage.—

Claudia's knees and hands matched, tight together, hands on knees.—You went to the house.—

—Yes. I saw. I couldn't believe it.—

To them, what was seen man in the mortuary (Claudia the post-mortem procedure body may be kept for days before process is performed). But—his face—to this Julian Verste was seen was his friend, as Duncan's friend. This realization made possible to begin to say what they want of him. Out of some instinctive agreement, neither right above the other, they quipped him alternately; they've found mula, at least some structure have put together for themselves the absence of any precedent.

—Could you give us an idea how, at all, Duncan could have mixed up in this, how his—shall I say?—his position as sort of tenant, his relations with the men in the house—friends—could have led to the circumstantial evidence there seen be against him? I was at the lecture today. You belong to that group of friends, don't you? We don't know any of them, really—

Claudia turned to Harald with eyes distantly lowered for interjection.—Except the girl-friend, he's brought her to him once or twice, here. But she wasn't there on Friday. She's not been mentioned.—

—Could you tell us something about the friendship, they all or less share the property, they have got on well with one another to decide to do that, live in close proximity—what could lead to Duncan being accused of such a horror? You must understand, I lived, my wife and I, parenthood, as three independent people we're close but we don't expect privacy to everything in his life. Different relationships. We have our own, he has his with others. It's fine. But when something like this falls on your head—we understand what this—respect, I suppose one another, can mean. Just that don't know anything we need know. Who was this man? What Duncan have to do with him must know! We can't go to see him tomorrow and ask him, can we? In a prison visitors' room? Where there, who else—



ve all been friends quite a ne, well certainly Dave, he architecture along with Duncan so did I—I'm with Duncan ame firm. But I didn't join en they took the house and age together. Khulu's a jour- think Duncan got to know st, when Khulu wanted to to town from Tembisa. Carl, spersen—(it is difficult to f, or hear spoken of, in the ordinary information, a man a mortuary) Jespersen came I bout two years ago with a —or maybe it was Norwe- ilm crew and somehow he go back. He works—was with an advertising agency. ee of them took the main d Duncan took the cottage. y more or less run the whole ogether. I mean, I'm often 's pretty much open house, od times.—

e are his inhibitions to be ne; his loyalty, the prized ntiality bestowed upon the er by the privilege of friend- h one he admires or who is, professionally cleverer than t is emerging is an aside: the f his relationship with their s difficult not to become im-

everyone got on well togeth- ight. There were no real ten- i know of? How serious they ave to be if we are to believe ncan, Duncan . . . ! Never e gun, never mind what the he garden says he saw! Isn't meone else who really did at he thought was a reason k Jespersen? Why Duncan? you know of?—

d's line of thought scored rs.

ere was the girl. Where was riday? Has the affair broken she and Duncan no longer

oung man has to adjust him- mmunication with a father s not require the euphemism nd" as suitable in communi- ith parents.

y're still together. Of course w—she was there. The day hursday night. We all ate at

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### SOLUTION TO THE OCTOBER PUZZLE

#### NOTES FOR "RIGHT ANGLES—V":

Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (\*).

CLUES: 1. (wr)eat(hes); 2. fo(rev.)-resting; 3. rook(Erie)s; 4. ecosp\*-Here!; 5. tenet(palindrome); 6. awe(ewe); 7. l(aye)r-E.R.; 8. fo(G.I.)es; 9. cat\*; 10. ascendance\*; 11. replicate; 12. esca\*-late; 13. sw(E)at; 14. plac(er)\*; 15. Kate\*; 16. (r)oast; 17. re(he)ar; 18. taf(rev.)-feta; 19. stencil\*; 20. telecaster\*; 21. Sea-n; 22. tea (homonym); 23. enrap-ture\*; 24. iterate\*; 25. eyes-ore; 26. (imp)acting; 27. c(lamb)akes; 28. Dee (two mngs.); 29. a-hem; 30. r-egrets; 31N. sidle\*; 31S. sneaker (two mngs.); 32. ch(a-ot)ic; 33. the (hidden); 34. (Es)so-oth(rs); 35. screen-play (pun); 36. past-as; 37. Cl-VI-C; 38. rose (homonym); 39. came(l); 40. Decatur\*; 41. teak\*; 42. recounts\*; 43. (Bee)-gees; 44. megados-E; 45. a-ges(ture); 46. virago (hidden in reverse); 47. (s)kit-s; 48. s(pin)-q(quietly)-u(pward)-(i)n-(r)(eal)-t(rouble); 49. Qui-sling; 50. (fore)sting.

SOLUTION TO OCTOBER DOUBLE ACROSTIC (NO. 178). JOHN STUART MILL: ON LIBERTY. If all mankind, minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.

CONTEST RULES: Send the quotation, the name of the author, and the title of the work, together with your name and address, to Double Acrostic No. 179, *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by November 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. The solution will be printed in the December issue. Winners of the September Double Acrostic (No. 177) are Cecilia M. Roberts, Laurel, Maryland; Barbara M. Clark, Cape Canaveral, Florida; and George L. Miller, Norman, Oklahoma.

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the house. Carl and David cooked for everyone.—

Was there nothing more to say? To be got from him; he is the messenger, he must not know more than the text he has been entrusted with.

Claudia drops her hands at her sides; the fingers stir.—Please tell us.—

Harald stands up.

The young man looked from one to the other as if for mercy, and then began in the only way he could manage, the dull defused tone of one relating the circumstances of a traffic accident in which no-one was hurt: the matter-of-factness that defends cornered emotion.

—Last year, in June, Carl got her a job at the advertising agency and they began to go to work in her car every day. Or sometimes in his. I don't know the arrangement. So they'd often have lunch somewhere together, too. But it was all right.

—What do you mean?—Harald is looking down at him.

—Duncan didn't mind. Didn't have anything to worry about.—

—Didn't mind that his lover was spending all day with another man?—

—Well, Carl and David were lovers. The three of them in the house are gay, Khulu too. Gay men are often very good friends to women, and they're no threat to women's lovers, you know that, of course. Carl and Duncan and Natalie are great friends. Special friends, in the group around the house. They were.—

—I see.—

But Harald, conscious that this is the reaction of himself as a heterosexual man, does not see how Duncan could not resent his woman spending her days with another male, no matter what sex was attractive to that male. His monosyllabic response opens the way, to him and to Claudia, for the return of dread, the dread that came with the pronouncement of the first message, that night; that Friday.

—Please tell us.—

It's a knell that Claudia sounds.

—On Thursday we all stayed quite late up at the house. There were some other people there, a couple of Khulu's friends as well. When we

le Khulu'd gone off with his car walked with Duncan back to the cottage. Natalie had volunteered to Carl with the washing-up, David had a few drinks too many and to bed. But apparently when thing was tidied up in the kitchen Natalie didn't go to the cottage. Carl woke up around two o'clock saw she wasn't there with him was worried something might have happened to her, crossing the street in the dark, and he went over to her house. Yes. Carl was making love to her in the living-room. Duncan didn't arrive at work on Friday morning and he called me at the office. I told me. He said he found the sofa—that sofa, you know, the one I say. It wasn't the first time Natalie had had some sort of thing on the side with someone. I know, we all knew, of one, of another. It's in her nature, but I think she loves him—Duncan. In her way of thinking he—he's absolutely faithful, completely possessive, other people don't exist for Duncan. Recollections and tears—the usual thing—and then she comes back to him this time—Carl. A man who loves women, but goes for Natalie. He put it crudely. Makes Natalie's bedroom and makes love to her on that sofa. Duncan was—I can describe it, a terrible state. She came back to the cottage, I think she was afraid of him. She left her car and left in the middle of the night, and she didn't come back on Friday, either. She wasn't there. When whatever happened. So that is all I know, not saying Duncan must have done what he's supposed to have done, not implying anything, I was just you thinking that what I've said is conclusive, I wasn't there to see, although I know Duncan's son, I don't know what was inside him—

They are all three on the sofa now, it's as if again something which there is no preparation for to happen, the atmosphere of that house where Duncan, the other man is alone on the sofa drinking a Bloody Mary.



y them, overcomes them, as can produce an outbreak of the body. But it cannot be; it has to be transformed something understandable, that dealt with under control. The er is about to wheel his steed and leave: that's it. He can stand, he has had enough of, ed.

n't go.—Claudia appeals, al- he has made no move. So it's ; all that was going to hap- that he was going to walk hem. She opens her hands in e towards where they were nd takes her place.

ler to keep him with them n to discussion of practical The possibility of yet anoth- ation for bail, once the case o for a first hearing; the con- sider which an awaiting-trial is kept. There is much, he know, they could continue nd he could tell about that th the sofa, and the cottage, tracing of their son's life at the young man is clearly ict between what is, they obligation to them, and a be- the codes of friendship. The ay they can come to this o ask whether lately Duncan nder any particular strain, ork (which is not a context acy). Did it show, there? as far as Harald could go in hing any long-term dis- state of mind that might sted in the cottage.

ican's a strong person.— might satisfy Harald but jerked her head away from men.—You work with him me office, d'you mean it's at he conceals his moods, ngs? Even from you? He ou, talked to you on the n Friday.—

e feel like discussing some- e do; if one of us doesn't ve don't. We let it go.—

s always been a reserved per- ight have been better if he d before.—

erved, how can you say that, he's always been affection- pen—you didn't expect him his love affairs with you?—

They were talking of their son, Ju- lian Verster's friend, as if he were dead. To be in prison is to be dead to connection with consciousness out- side, to exist there only in the past tense. Appalled silence interrupted them. Harald gave Claudia the look that in familiar signals between them, suggested they should give the young man a drink. She seemed un- comprehending, not to be ap- proached. He fetched glasses and bottles, cans of soda and fruit juice, the usual habit of hospitality. The filled glasses gave them something to do with their hands; if they could not speak they could swallow.

—I don't remember ever seeing him drink whisky.—They followed her: to the bottle of whisky, the un- used glass, and the bucket of ice be- side that sofa.

Before he left, it was safe to ask whether as a friend (close as he evi- dently is) Julian Verster can suggest anything in particular that they might take with them on the visit the next day.

Nothing, of course. Noth- ing.

**A**wake in the night, there is enactment of what might take place. Instead of the landscapes of dreams, darkness forms the prison, steel grilles, keys (maybe now there is electronically controlled security, like the green or red eyes that signal or bar right of entry or egress through bank doors). If they had never been in court before, it is cer- tain that neither had ever been in- side a prison. The structure comes from the narrowing perspective of corridors in scenes from television films, the eyes through Judas aper- tures, with a sound-track of heavy echoes, since of all the sough of ordi- nary life, the conversation of birds, humans, traffic, only shouts and the cymbal of boots striking concrete floors remain. The wearers of the boots don't have to be dreamed; they already have been encountered in Court B17, young men with open-air faces who stand by in stolid inatten- tion with the expression of content- ed preoccupation with their own pri- vate lives while crime and punishment are decreed. The cell—

but prison visitors won't see the cells, there will be a visitors' room, the cells will be like whatever it is to which the prisoner went down under the well of the court: unknown. There is no privacy more inviolable than that of the prisoner. To visual- ize that cell in which he is thinking, to reach what he alone knows; that is a blank in the dark.

You can't sleep, either.

Beside her, he doesn't answer. But she hears from his breathing—it does not have the familiar rhythm—that Harald is not asleep. In the dark, his attention is too concentrated to re- spond. That is all. He, too, has an in- violable privacy: he is praying. Har- ald is what is known as a great reader, which means a searcher after some- thing that is ambitiously called the truth; both conditional concepts he would be the first, amusedly, to con- cede. He has tried, over years, through different formulations he has come upon, to explain prayer to her in a way that would be understand- able to someone without religious faith, and the nearest he has come to this was to offer Simone Weil's defin- ition of prayer as a heightened form of intelligent concentration. When she questioned the proviso "intelli- gent"—what else could concentra- tion be?—he satisfied her uncertainty by pointing out that there exists the possibility of a bug-eyed concentra- tion on something trivial, which does not imply intelligence in the reli- gious and philosophical sense. Prayer as a form of intelligent concentration is secularized in a way Claudia has had to accept. She has done this by separating the intelligent concentra- tion from to whom or what it is ad- dressed; then it is not a communica- tion with a supposedly existing God, but a heightened means of communi- cating with one's own resources in solution of guidance through fears, failures and sorrows.

Harald is praying. His prayer en- ters the enactment of what will take place tomorrow. She lies in the dark beside him. What is he praying for? Is he praying that their son did not do what he is accused of? If Harald needs to pray for this, does that mean he believes what he cannot say, that his son killed a man? ■



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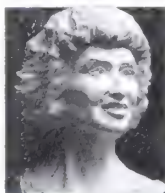
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# The Golan Heights

## What are the facts?

In its keen desire to bring peace to its people, after almost fifty years of war and bloodshed, Israel had been prepared to make far-reaching concessions to Syria on the Golan, in exchange for real peace. But Benjamin Netanyahu, who has promised his people *shalom batuach* (peace with security) is not prepared to give up all of the Golan and to return to the "death trap" borders of 1967 or anything close to them. In order to survive within such borders, Israel would have to rely on the goodwill of the Arab states, most of which—with the recent exception of Jordan and of the cold peace with Egypt—are still in a declared state of war with Israel. An aggressor will attack only if confident of victory. With the Golan in Israeli hands, attacking Arabs could be confident of defeat, and peace would be preserved. To hand the Golan to Syria is a prescription for war and for Israel's destruction.

The Golan is the source of over one-third of Israel's fresh water. In 1964, with the Golan in Syrian hands, Syria attempted to divert these headwaters and to cripple Israel's water supply. It is more than likely that, given another opportunity, Syria would once again attempt to destroy Israel's water supply.

s, thousands of missiles and air- Israel in a matter does not make for it gives Israel a for mobilization. source of over one- h water. In 1964, rian hands, Syria these headwaters water supply. It is at, given another would once again el's water supply.

1 *Harper's* research; 2,3 NASA (Washingt.); 4 U.S. General Accounting Office; 5 *Forbes* (N.Y.C.)/*Kommers* (Moscow); 6 Feature Story Prof. (Moscow); 7 Association of the Independent Electronic Media (Belgrade); 8 U.S. Department of Defense; 9 Embassy; 10 Senate Foreign Relations Committee/Congressional Research Service; 11 Embassy of the State of Mexico City; 12 Buckingham Palace; 13 Paula Jones Legal Defense (Washington); 14 Patricia Scott (Washington); 15 Common Cause (Washington)/Congressional Research Service; 16,17 Fox News/Opinion Dynamics (N.Y.C.); 18 National Medical Association (Alexandria, Va.); 19 Feron Communications (N.Y.C.); 20 Rocky's Mussels (Denver); 21,22 *Sports Illustrated* (N.Y.C.); 23 *Harper's* research; 24 National Basketball Association (Philadelphia); 25 Hard Rock Cafe, International (Miami); 26 U.S. State Department Embassy of Mexico; 27,28 Miami Herald; 29,30 *Legal Time Magazine*/HBI; 31,32 *Access Reports* (Burg, Va.); 33 Payment Systems International; 34 Mattel Inc. (El Segundo, Calif.); 35 National Turkey Federation (Washington); 36 JFK Presidential Library (Boston); 37 Sixth Floor Museum (Dallas).

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# PUZZLE

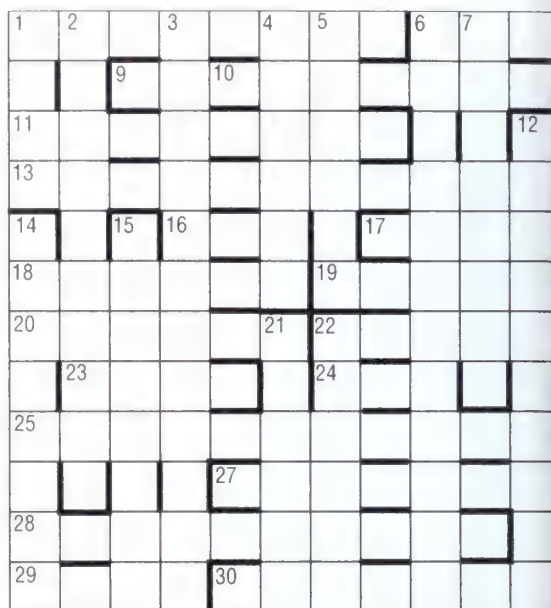
## Pure Puzzle

By Richard E. Maltby Jr.

No gimmicks this month, just straightforward clues to be entered normally.

No, I take that back.

Clue answers include three proper names, one foreign word, and one common acronym. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 89.



### ACROSS

1. League of Nations is going in a certain direction—most foolish (8)
6. English head off lions and tigers in gorges (4)
9. "Club Med Site"—*Art Beat* (10)
11. Thomas Burton, poet and actor, personified this Dodge Team (8)
13. Seeing ads for soon-to-appear comics, they drop everything! (12)
16. Stir, mostly with a ruler (3)
17. Relatives of Teddy come to bad ends (4)
18. In average, outside Latin America, it makes waves and we get the message (6)
19. Awesome: leaving hunting dogs in sweats (6)
20. Gecko, e.g., taking time out to make a heap—again (6)
22. Revolutionary watch bands shorten links so no one knows (6)
23. Bullets don't start this, on reflection! (4)
24. Antique auctioned off with the original facade (3)
25. Boss explodes about heartless redhead after faked orgasm spreads (12)
27. I had quickly turned, sighting cleavage (8)
28. The lady left one who is shy something—'beater' (12)

29. Quick! Quick! A gull! (4)
30. They catch waves for (sigh!) kicks—so they say (8)

### DOWN

1. Pet isn't trainable (4)
2. Trial doses intoxicated early groupie! (10)
3. Cooling sole, chimps, bucks and does (12)
4. Back get out of shape? Train inside—that's one course (6)
5. Material for Senate Whips (6)
6. Filthy rich work with poets who charge by the foot? (12)
7. Least likely to be a drunk bastard before getting support from saint (8)
8. To be exact, it might get you less fame (8)
12. Develop? Latins must. People have high hopes for them! (10)
14. Gets on schedule, initially, with correct clothing on Sunday (8)
15. His smirk can lead to a quick engagement (8)
21. Stuffer, getting the last word (6)
22. Big stories can make Dailies but it takes a bit out of editor (6)
26. Digs stuffing (4)

**WINNERS:** Rules: Send completed program with name and address to "Pure Puzzle," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10017. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by November 1, 1997. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the January 1998 issue. Winners of the September puzzle, "Travel Document," are Ruth Brown, Pullman, Washington; Andre H. Kesler, Los Angeles, California; and Bart Bramley, Chicago, Illinois.





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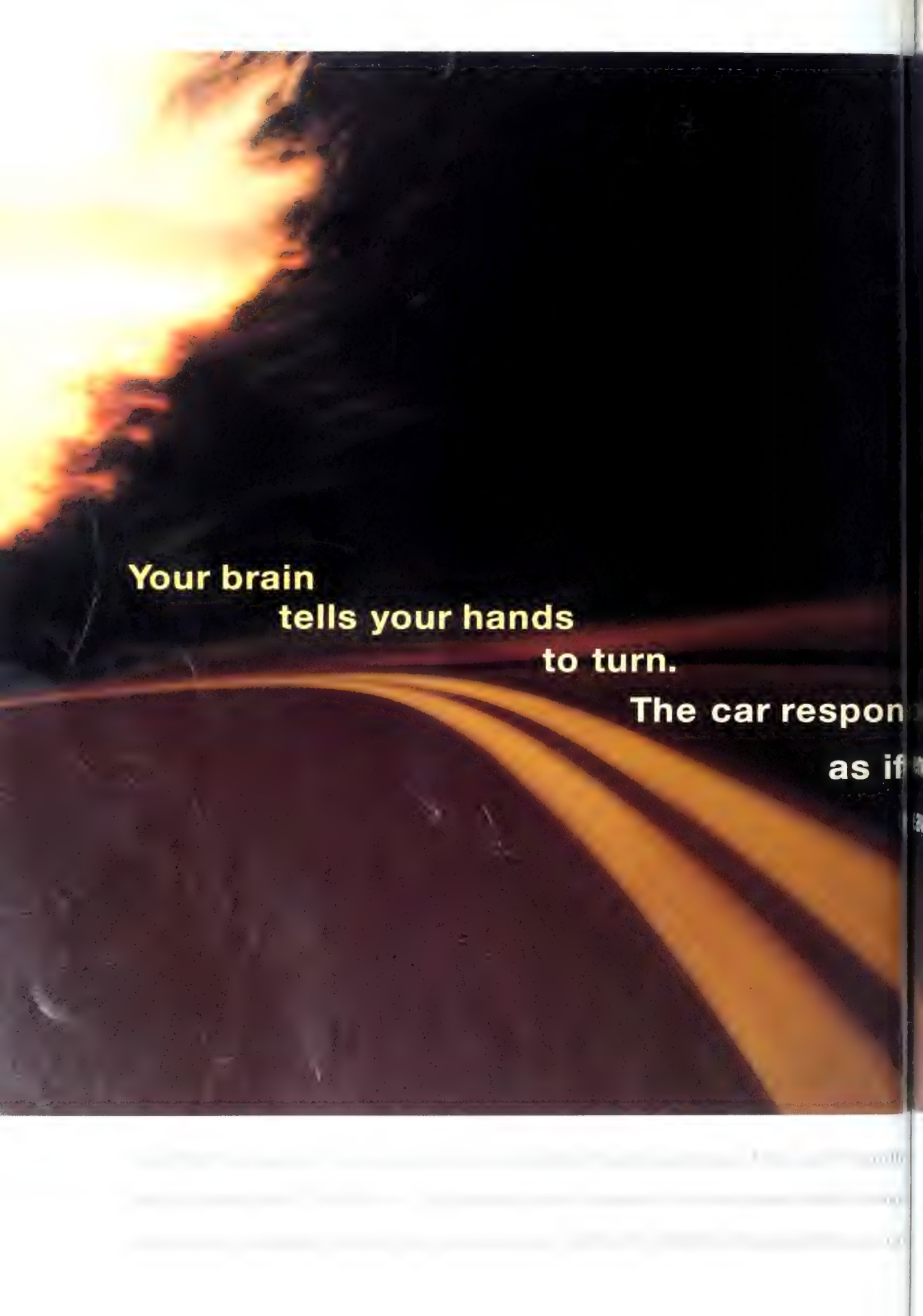
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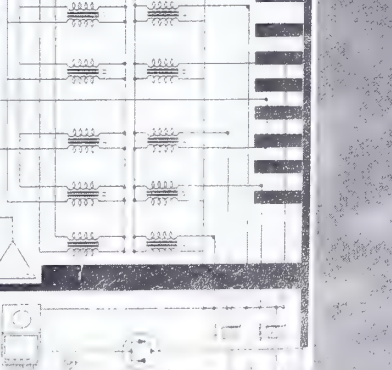
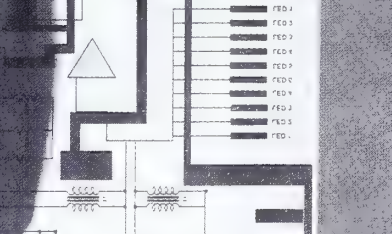
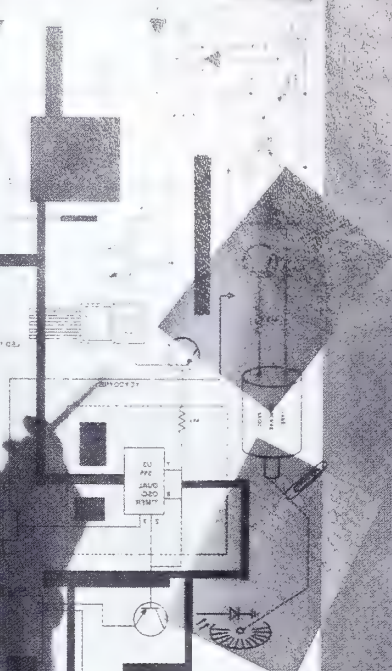
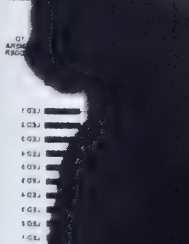
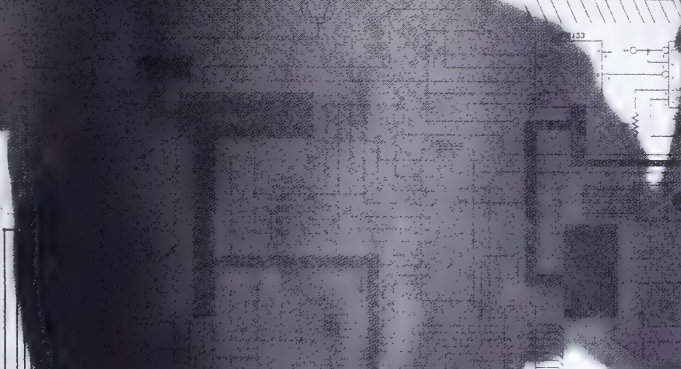
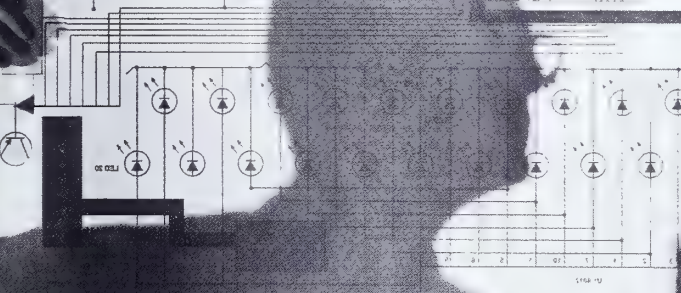
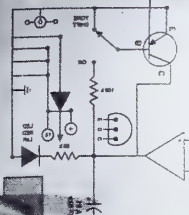
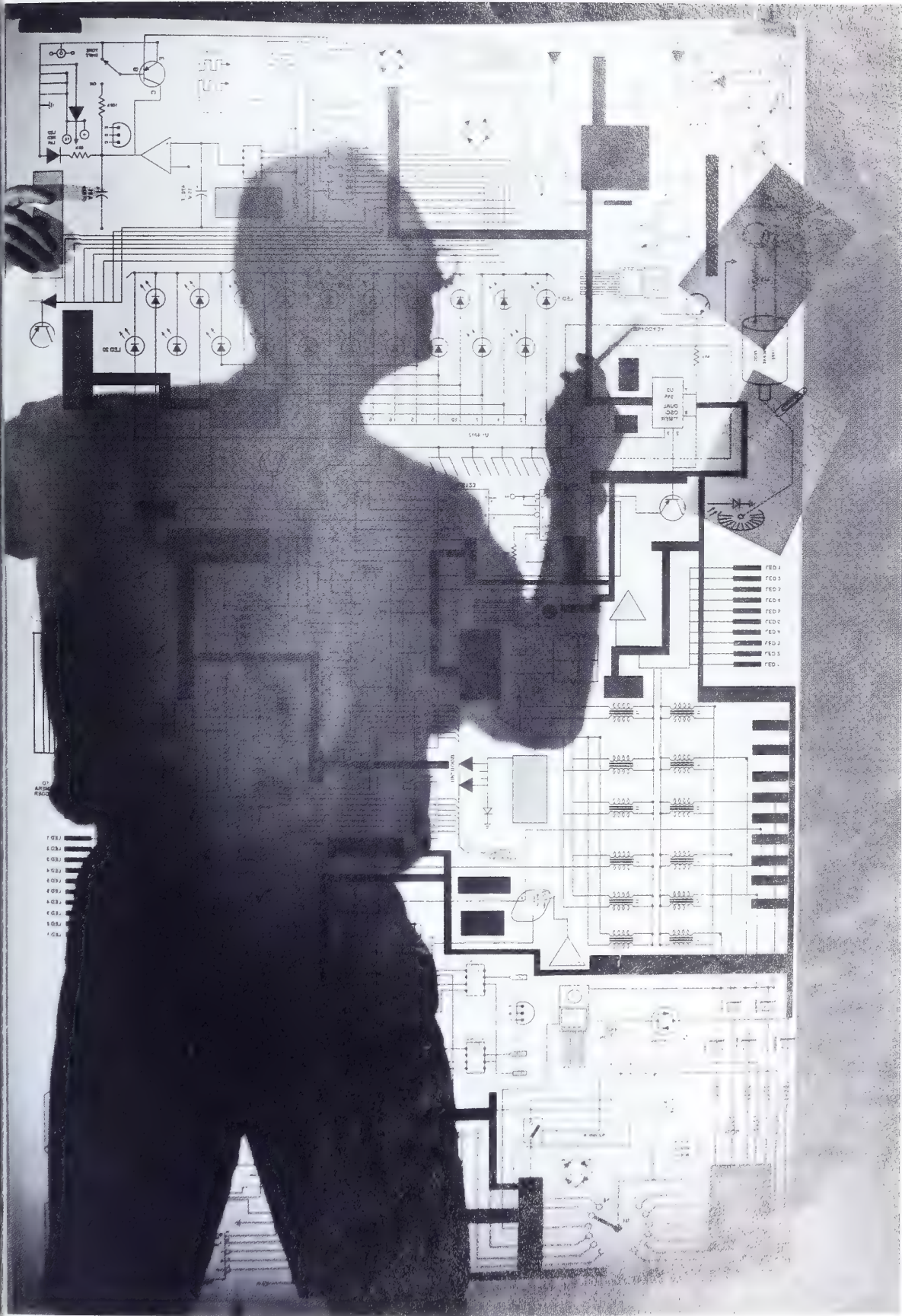
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# HARPER'S

M A G A Z I N E

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DECEMBER 1997

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# LETTERS

## Educated Consumers

Mark Edmundson's essay ["On the Uses of a Liberal Education," Part I, September] was, unfortunately, quite accurate. Too many times I have felt the awkward silence of my classmates after a professor's question and wondered why no one, including myself, was speaking. Edmundson accurately finds the genesis of this sensibility in an upbringing in which we were sheltered from criticism and endlessly flattered.

My generation has been crippled by a culture that sees assertion as aggression, a culture that leads us to believe that having a strong opinion is inconsiderate and disrespectful as well as uncool. Our timidity is a well-meant hybrid of multicultural tolerance and a *fin-de-siècle* skepticism that has become a caricature of itself, powerless and pathetic.

Brian Seibert  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rather than "Higher Education: Dead and Alive," your September cover wrap should have read "Teaching: Dead and Alive." Mark Edmundson gives his students what he decides they want—knowledge in a wry, casual package—then concludes that they lack all passion and genius when their class evaluations don't say how touched and challenged they were. His complaint about their writing is even more telling. Perhaps his students can't write idiosyncratic and

original essays. Well, professor, your job! A unique, well-crafted voice is not the birthright of genius but a product of hard work and effective teaching. Unlike Edmundson's favorite student, Joon Lee, few go to college to give a literary performance. Lacking such skills, nineteen hardly dooms one to a life of passionless mediocrity.

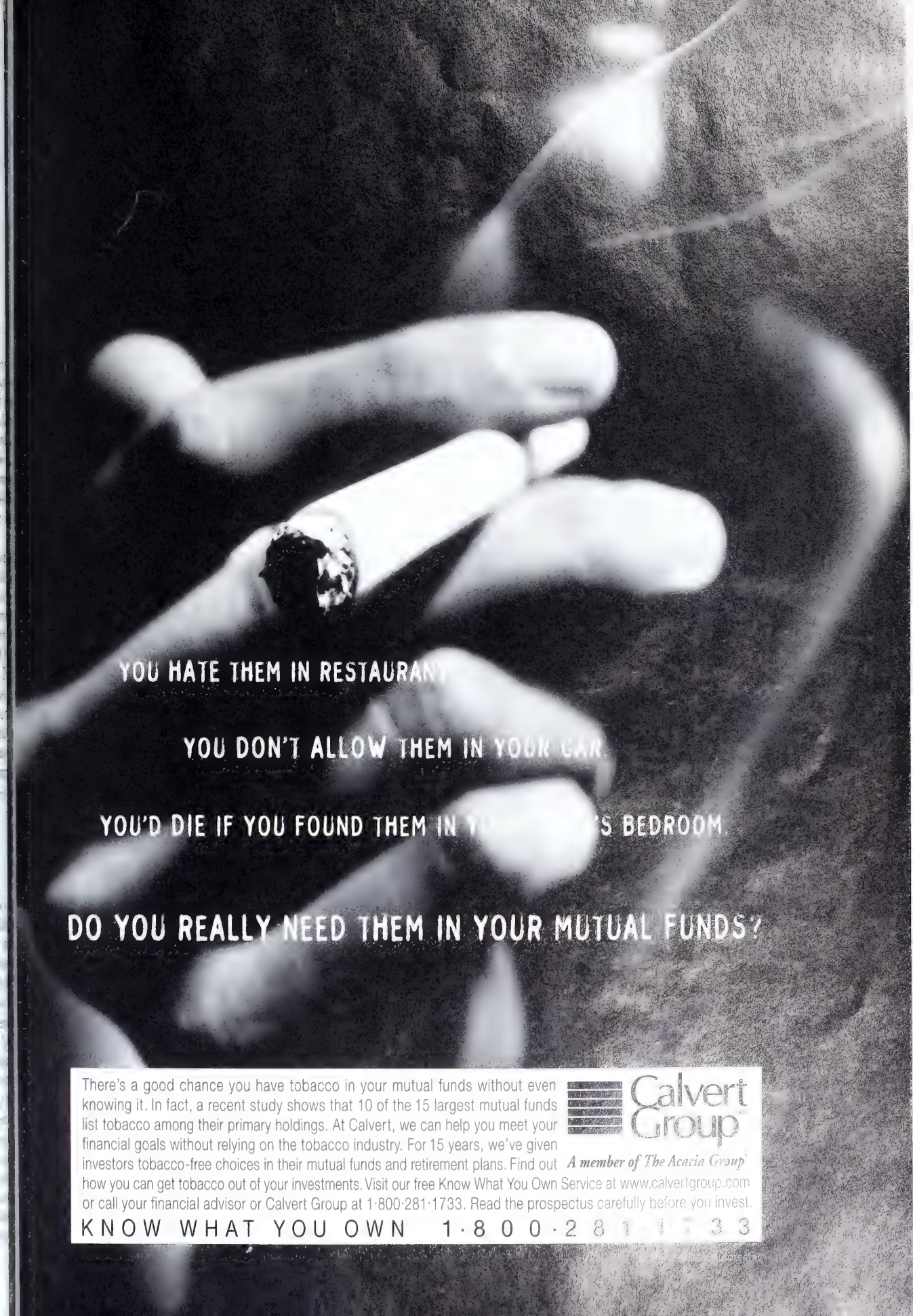
While Edmundson is enjoying the modern benefits of professorial life at a prestigious university, too busy working on his book to pay attention to the journals of the students who pay his bills, Earl Shorris ["On the Uses of a Liberal Education," Part II, September] and his colleagues have moved on. Their belief in the power of the liberal arts to liberate the mind is as much an inspiration to my generation as Edmundson's example of cynicism, pedantry, and self-segregation is a cautionary tale.

Tetine Sentell  
Somerville, Mass.

I have to admit that I was a bit surprised when I read Mark Edmundson's essay. Last fall I was a student in the Freud class that Edmundson uses to illustrate his claims about the state of today's youth. I believe I can explain the "generic" responses and lukewarm evaluations he garnered from students. I have entered few classes in my university career whose objectives were so poorly defined and whose assignments were so amorphous and ill-explained as Edmundson's, with his obvious contempt for undergraduates, wasted my time and my money, and then used my experiences in front of the class as fodder for a sardonic critique.

Harper's Magazine welcomes reader response. Please address correspondence to Letters Editor. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to editing. Volume precludes individual acknowledgment.





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my generation's intellectual incompetence and consumeristic attitude. Let me also note that the capitalist system Edmundson condemns as well as my willingness to be a consumer of higher education are what allow him to drive around in his sporty silver BMW.

Insults aside, it is the responsibility of the professor, not the students, to determine the tenor of the class. Edmundson chose to treat us like elementary school students incapable of discussion at a higher level, and, sure enough, that's the kind of class we became.

If Edmundson wants his students to be "changed by the course," perhaps he should try teaching with a modicum of passion, enthusiasm, and respect for his students. The repugnant image of himself that he sees in our evaluations is a reflection of the boredom and displeasure he obviously feels while teaching us. I should confess, however, that I *was* changed by the course. I'm a little more cynical, a little less enthusiastic about my chosen field of study than I was three years ago.

Lisa J. Kijewski  
Charlottesville, Va.

In my opinion, as a student at the University of Iowa, Mark Edmundson's article entitled "I. As Lite Entertainment for Bored College Students" was pretty negative and pessimistic. I liked what he said in the beginning of the article about his students saying they "enjoyed" his class. It's true students shouldn't be entertained or think of class as fun. The classroom is a place to learn and challenge the mind. Me becoming a future teacher myself have found this a valuable lesson. A good teacher would want his/her students to be enlightened. What bothers me then about Edmundson's attitude is him talking about liberal arts education being ineffective. I think he is really drawing it out.

Students take school seriously and expect to succeed. It's not good enough to just go to college and enjoy the atmosphere and cool philosophies like Edmundson made it sound. There is definitely a passion

and when I have my own class I plan to help my students find it.  
Deborah L. Thompson  
Iowa City, Iowa

## Bleeding in the Holy Land

How objective and noncommittal was Robert Fisk's account of the Israelis hit by Hezbollah's rocket during Israel's Operation Grapes of Wrath in April 1996 ["May in America," Readings, August 1998]. Names of the wounded, no graphic descriptions of their wounds, word-by-word recital of the carnage that accompanied the arrival of the rockets, no mention of the human cost of the blast or the pain felt by the victims. The rockets simply "wounded several Israelis." Then, how graphic was the story of Israeli reprisal. Such was the cool, dry objectivity of the preceding paragraphs disappeared. The adjectives are unleashed, vividly and carefully personalized and made up by names, conversations intimated, recalled, pain revealed, terror betrayed. What creative writing!

So why am I upset? Because *Harper's Magazine* should know better and the readers of *Harper's* should know that the victims of the bombings and of the Katyusha rockets also had names, also shed blood, also experienced pain, also knew terror. They should know that the greatest obstacle to peace in the Middle East is the Arab belief that their actions carry no consequences and that they can engage in acts of terrorism without fear of retaliation. Printing Fisk's article, *Harper's* encouraged them in that illusion.

Seymour Ginsberg  
Delray Beach, Fla.

In the aftermath of yet another bombing in Jerusalem, not only many readers of *Harper's Magazine* are shaking their heads and reacting at the apparent truth of the situation in June's Index that one in five Palestinians "approve" of such bombings. It's enough to consider what they already want to be doing: bombing Arabs, terrorist Arabs.

But I don't buy the "one in five" statistic, because I don't know a



nian who "approves" of suicide bombings—and I'd like to know what constitutes "approval" anyway. The Israeli government gets terrific feedback out of statistics like these, and I don't be at all surprised if it was they made up. No one suspects perhaps there is a larger context in which these bombings could now make sense. I live here, and I have to look far in order to understand that, under the circumstances, they make a great deal of sense. Am I approving, according to your definition? Does that make me the "one in three"?

I put it bluntly, what Palestinians have to put up with on a daily basis would make *anyone* bomb a bus. Every American could experience that for just a single day. The harassment and humiliation of passing through a checkpoint, the filthy language and foul attitudes of the soldiers toward people who are only trying to get to work or to the hospital or to visit their families. I'm sick to death of the glazed expression well-meaning Israelis get when I mention the checkpoints, the closures, the water rationing, the unemployment, the confiscations, the house demolitions. How many Americans would be willing to share our most recent experience of eight days without a drop in water? That's eight days without drinking water, without bathing without water for washing hands, without brushing teeth, never mind the dirty clothes and clothes stacked to the ceiling and crawling with ants and cockroaches. And I had the particular pleasure of cleaning up my four-year-old's mess without the benefit of water for a week when she contracted a bad cold and threw up repeatedly for twenty-four-hour period.

I know the whole point of this "one in three" statistic is that anyone who "approves" of suicide bombings must be something less than human—and if you're less than human, you can't possibly experience the lack of respect as dehumanizing. The editors of *Harper's* have now made their own contribution to our dehumanization, demonstrating the shallowness of their insight and the depth of their contempt for our suffering—with Netanyahu and his laugh-

able four-month self-study course in Arabic, which was also mentioned in the June Index. But the fact of the matter is that whether young Palestinians bomb or refrain from bombing, their situation remains virtually the same—desperate, intolerable. We should ask ourselves not why they commit these bombings but why they do not do it more often!

A. Nassar  
West Bank, Palestine

## Boy Trouble

If the purpose of Harah Frost's letter [October] was to cow *Harper's* into publishing female writers more frequently, it is ill-served by her censorious, near-Helmsian tone and rhetoric. Essays of self-discovery, such as the David James Duncan piece that she excoriates ["Birdwatching as a Blood Sport," July], cannot help but contain some "irony, wit, and narcissism." The question of whether those qualities are the exclusive province of the male of the species is moot, is it not? Censoring those with potentially disagreeable characteristics sounds suspiciously paternalistic, as if both Duncan and his readers were too dense to draw their own conclusions.

Robert Bové  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

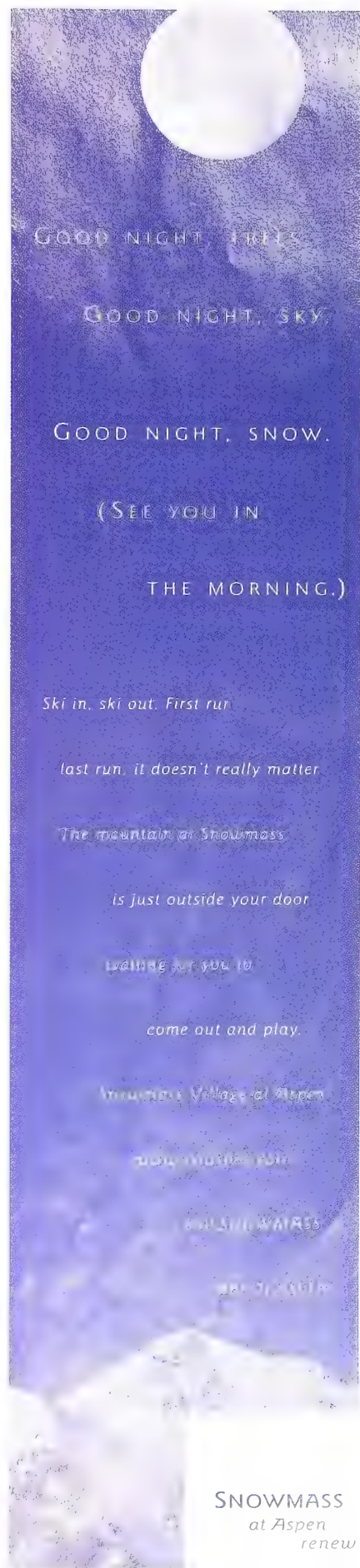
Regarding Harah Frost's thin-lipped polemic, in which *Harper's Magazine* and white males were taken to task, I refer her to H. L. Mencken, who wrote that "the central belief of every moron is that he is the victim of a mysterious conspiracy against his common rights and true deserts." Mencken knew how to deflate a windbag. He is missed.

W. R. Marcy  
Spring Valley, N.Y.

## Give Us Your Poor

Barbara Ehrenreich's article on welfare privatization ["Spinning the Poor into Gold," August] is a long-winded antibusiness diatribe. In her discussion of private companies that administer

Continued on page 82





# NOTEBOOK

## The consolations of vanity

By Lewis H. Lapham

*There are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money.*

—Samuel Johnson

When Ted Turner presented the United Nations with the promise of \$1 billion last September, I was in the midst of rereading W. A. Swanberg's biography of William Randolph Hearst, and the coincidence offered a perspective not only on the character of tycoons and their restless self-promotions but also on the revised purpose and changing practice of American journalism over the last hundred years. The Hearst newspapers in the early twentieth century occupied more or less the same place on the bandstand of the American news and entertainment media as the one now held by Time Warner Inc., and the proprietor of the former resembled the principal stockholder of the latter in a number of obvious ways: both of them delighting in the joy of money, both collectors (Hearst of European painting and sculpture, Turner of buffalo herds and ranches in Montana), both attached to movie actresses (Turner to Jane Fonda, Hearst to Marion Davies), both scornful of the conventional wisdoms of the day, both fond of the offhand remark and ill-considered phrase, both familiar with the farther shores of megalomania.

Turner made known his generous intention in the ballroom of a New York City hotel, to a crowd of maybe 500 people attending a banquet sponsored by the United Nations Association, and the front-page story in the next day's *New York Times* described an audience "stunned" by the show of

munificence, diplomats speechless with amazement, foundation executives bowing their heads in awe. Similarly excited accounts appeared in the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*, and although none of them mentioned Hearst's name, the tone of the reporting cast Turner in the image of a press mogul of ancient and heroic size, the founder of CNN and the owner of the Atlanta Braves who had restored Technicolor to the movies of the 1930s, a giant of the old school and a friend of Fidel Castro, a figure cast in marble or bronze.

For the next several days the news media elaborated the themes of Turner's wealth and iconoclasm, presenting his "brashness" as proof of the genius that he had brought to the reformatting of American journalism. Columnists once inclined to dismiss Turner as "a nutcake" or "the mouth of the South" revised their opinions in the benign glow of \$1 billion and discovered that some of Turner's best-remembered remarks (about Rupert Murdoch's likeness to the late Adolf Hitler, or the blind stupidity of most American corporate executives) were best understood as eccentric pleasantries. Editors of all denominations cleared a broad expanse of four-color space for a review of Turner's sporting adventures and a listing of Turner's real estate holdings: Turner as duck hunter and bold environmentalist; Turner as yachtsman winning the America's Cup race in 1977 off Newport, Rhode Island, and the Fastnet race in England in 1979, a race in which fifteen competitors (men made of lesser stuff) drowned in rough seas; Turner and his wife, Jane, as the proud owners of eight

ranches in Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico that added to a acreage roughly equivalent to the of Delaware.

Nothing much was said about character of the news program on CNN—not because the panel might not have wished to do so because there was nothing much to say. The network is a marketing device, not a means of conveying any thought, or opinion likely to disturb the peace of a corporate golf course retrieve the conscience of a befuddled congressman. Redefined to fit our postmodern circumstance, the "press lord" no longer connotes the presence of an individual. Nor does it suggest the possibility of dissent or unpopular argument. Convicted with the anonymous arithmetic of a conglomerate as unwieldy as Time Warner Inc., combining the variety of the film and record business with those of books and magazine, amusement parks, the proof of creative energy and intellect stands revealed as a number so remote from any rhetorical components that no one can be held accountable for what he says or doesn't say. Even Rupert Murdoch, who pretends to a point of view somehow associated with neoconservative politics and Christian orthodoxy, gives over his several newspapers and television syndicates to the direction of the market, which counts little for the Constitution as it does for the Virgin Mary.

The numbers run the business, the meantime appearances must be kept up and somebody must strike the mogul's pose, which is why they placed their emphasis on the second



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tributes of Turner's many dishes (peteats instead of his intellectual hobbyhorses), and why, as soon as he had astonished the hotel crowd and received the congratulations of the U.N. secretary general for his "noble and extraordinary" largesse, Turner hurried off to his own CNN studios in New York to tell the story to his own Larry King. It was "spur of the moment, you know," he said, "like deciding you're going to buy a new car or something." He hadn't thought to do anything grand or important, he said, but two days before the banquet, on the plane coming into New York, he had been looking over his monthly financial statement and had noticed that since January of this year his net worth had moved upward from \$2.2 billion to \$3.2 billion. "So, I made it in nine months, it's not that big a deal." But still, because "you're born pretty selfish," it was hard to learn to give money away, harder than most people might think, because "people love money. It doesn't matter how much you've got, you want more. I mean, look at the ball players, look at Bill Gates. I mean, he feels like he can't get by, you know."

The interview was awful to behold, but not for the reasons that I would have guessed, and had I not been keeping company that week with Swanberg's *Citizen Hearst*, I would have missed the point about the narrow range of Turner's imagination and the smallness of his ambition. Had he the mind to do so, he could have assigned the \$1 billion to the making of a lively television network—one that challenged, or at least questioned, the ways of the world about which he was in the habit of making loud and theatrical complaints. Or, in a more romantic vein, he conceivably could have taken it into his head to imitate the example of his hero, Teddy Roosevelt, and by recruiting a troop of latter-day Rough Riders (from a roster of Atlanta Braves, Newport yachtsmen, and Montana rancheros) gone off to invade Mexico or pacify East Los Angeles. But we live in an age that transfers the acts of derring-do from the arena of public event to the sphere of private expression. More often than not, and with the notable exception of George Soros, the change of venue invites our contemporary moguls to select their

personae from the L. L. Bean catalogue and to seek the consolation of vanity.

And so here was Turner in September 1997, banging the drum of his own magnificence, challenging the moguls made of lesser stuff (Bill Clinton chief among them) to a child's game of who's afraid of the dark, who's got the biggest frog, and so on. It was exactly a hundred years ago to the day that in September 1897, also in New York, but fifty blocks south, on Princeton House Square, banging the drum of war with Spain, The American was born. The American government at the time had no quarrel with Spain, but Hearst hoped to provide it with one—in part because he thought it good imperialist policy for the United States to annex Cuba, in part because he knew that bloody stained headlines boosted the sales of his newspapers. He already had made the success of the *San Francisco Examiner* when he showed up in New York in 1895, thirty-two years old and a mirror of Napoleon. Standing over six feet tall, very blond, speaking in a pitched voice, and dressed in the

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# ...AND HISTORY-MAKING ANSWERS



a dandy, Hearst rejoiced in all loud and extravagant. A spec-  
 fortune inherited from his fa-  
 gold and silver mines permit-  
 Hearst to indulge his enthusiasms  
 politics, Ziegfeld girls, walking  
 and brass bands—which, when  
 with his formidable intelli-  
 resulted in the florid bloom of  
 and underwear that soon came  
 known as yellow journalism.

eighteen months the *Journal* had  
 printing vivid, first-hand accounts  
 cruel suffering inflicted by Span-  
 and tyrants on the innocent,  
 cratic, freedom-loving Cuban  
 . The stories were counterfeit,  
 posed by an atelier of thirty-odd  
 and writers, among them Fred-  
 Remington and Richard Harding  
 that Hearst had dispatched to  
 to dramatize the revolution pre-  
 ly taking place in the moun-  
 The revolution was nowhere to  
 nd, and so Hearst's correspon-  
 stationed themselves in wicker  
 on the terrace of the Hotel  
 erra in Havana, where they  
 iced drinks and received news  
 pathy. Borrowing from one an-  
 stores of adjectives, they sent  
 of imaginary atrocities and non-  
 nt heroes, descriptions of battles  
 ever occurred, fanciful but stir-  
 dles of Spanish officers roasting  
 lic priests on charcoal fires and  
 g prisoners to sharks.

en all else failed, they sent an at-  
 ve Cuban girl whom they per-  
 el to travel north with a terrible  
 of how she had been violated by  
 al Valeriano Weyler, the com-  
 er of the Spanish troops, whom  
 respondents had never met but  
 they routinely described as "the  
 ator of haciendas," "the destroyer  
 lies," and "the outrager of wom-  
 /hen the fair maiden arrived in  
 'ork, Hearst prepared for her ap-  
 ce at Madison Square Garden  
 he three concise instructions,  
 the same and always ready to  
 that expressed his reading of the  
 Amendment: "Hire military  
 Secure orators. Arrange fire-

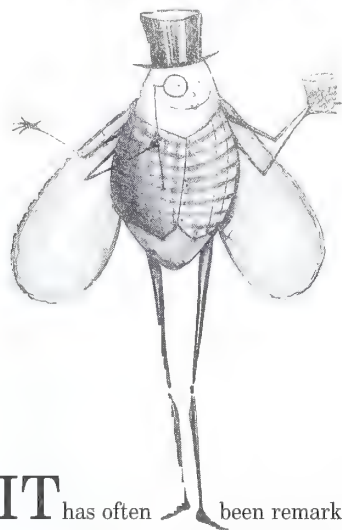
sober newspapers of the day de-  
 the bald-faced fabrication of  
 ws with a fulmination of pious  
 ials in defense of journalistic

virtue. Hearst, who had been educat-  
 ed both at Harvard and in Europe and  
 who, unlike the proprietors of our own  
 media syndicates, knew good writing  
 when he saw it, replied in an editori-  
 al that a hundred years later still stands  
 as the incomparable summing up of  
 the tabloid press: "*The Journal* realized  
 what is frequently forgotten in jour-  
 nalism, that if news is wanted it often  
 has to be sent for. . . . No other journal  
 in the United States includes in its  
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 of reputation and talent. It is the *Jour-  
 nal's* policy to engage brains as well as  
 to get the news, for the public is even  
 more fond of entertainment than it is  
 of information."

President William McKinley's re-  
 luctance to declare war confirmed  
 Hearst's suspicion that he was either a  
 traitor or a Wall Street profiteer, but  
 when the American battleship *Maine*  
 exploded and sank in the Havana har-  
 bor in February 1898, drowning 260  
 officers and men, the President had no  
 choice but to accede to what had be-  
 come a loud, public outcry in favor of  
 punishing the insolent Spaniard.  
 Hearst was overjoyed, and on learn-  
 ing that Theodore Roosevelt meant  
 to go to Cuba at the head of his own  
 troop of cavalry, he volunteered his  
 steam yacht *Buccaneer* to the service of  
 the American Navy. He put the propo-  
 sition in a letter to McKinley, de-  
 scribing the length and size of the ship,  
 assuring the President that it was in  
 perfect order, offering to provide com-  
 petent sailors, a sufficient number of  
 guns, and a "suitable supply of ammu-  
 nition, to be renewed at my expense  
 whenever needed." Hearst also as-  
 sumed that he would remain aboard  
 as the *Buccaneer's* captain, "with the  
 knowledge, of course, that certain ex-  
 aminations are necessary to qualify as  
 commander of a ship."

The Spanish-American War pre-  
 sented Hearst with the first of numer-  
 ous grand occasions for which he se-  
 cured orators and arranged fireworks.  
 Throughout his long reign as a sover-  
 eign publisher, he retained his liking  
 for writers of "reputation and talent,"  
 sending Stephen Crane to the Greco-  
 Turkish War, Ambrose Bierce to  
 Washington, Mark Twain to London,  
 Joaquin Miller to the Klondike Gold  
 Rush, and Damon Runyon to the Ken-

# HAMISH NOT SQUEAMISH



**IT** has often been remarked  
 that devotees of The Macallan Malt  
 Whisky nurture an almost mystical  
 belief in the 'water of life' qualities of  
 their favourite dram. But seldom has it  
 found such expression as in the follow-  
 ing true anecdote kindly related to us  
 by Mr C. Wemyss of Ravenhead, Notts.

'My friend Hamish, at a pre-  
 Christmas party in my garden, found  
 a fly had landed in his glass, and  
 drowned. "Don't worry, Hamish,"  
 said I. "Have another Macallan in a  
 clean glass." "I shall do nothing of the  
 sort," he replied, removing the tiny  
 creature from his glass and sipping  
 the sherry-gold elixir.

"The Macallan never hurt a fly, and  
 nor does a fly hurt The Macallan!"  
 Ten minutes later indeed the insect  
 stirred and flew off.

"There you are," said Hamish tri-  
 umphantly. "And now you can give  
 me a gnat's more."

## THE MACALLAN. THE SINGLE MALT SCOTCH.

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...and the... The result of Hearst's... frequent... the scale of his... and the... for his... his political enthusiasms. Although he failed in his own three attempts at the American presidency (in 1904, and again in 1908 and 1912), his providing of the Spanish-American War promoted Teddy Roosevelt to the rank of hero (and thus to the waving of his hat and sword on the balcony of the White House), and when the Democratic Party couldn't agree on a presidential candidate at its Chicago convention in 1932, Hearst instructed the delegates beholden to the backing of his papers in Texas and California to make up the necessary weight of votes for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Hearst's convictions often carried him against the currents of both popular and respectable opinion. His ferocious polemics against the Wall Street trusts, and against President McKinley for siding with those trusts, resulted in violent and unanimous defamations of his character when McKinley was murdered in Buffalo in 1901 and the Hearst papers were held

responsible for having poisoned the assassin's mind with incitements to anarchy. Opposing America's engagement in World War I (because he didn't much care for the British, detested Woodrow Wilson, and took seriously George Washington's advice about avoiding foreign military adventures), Hearst was vilified as an unspeakable blackguard without a grain of patriotism or conscience.

But whatever his faults, which were as numerous as the contradictions in the character of a man who professed sympathy for the American working classes while at the same time wrapping himself up in the luxuries of medieval castles and private railroad cars, Hearst placed his money at the service of something other than his own self-aggrandizement.

The grandees of the American press in the first half of the twentieth century—not only Hearst but Henry Luce and Robert McCormick—meant to have a hand and a say in the shaping of events, and they imposed on their publications the force of their own character and the sound of their own voice. Their heirs and assigns leave

the choice of topics to the hire. As long as the statements of pro- loss meet the standard of corpor- pection, the editorial staff (me- wine stewards and gamekeepers- writers of reputation and tale- main free to say whatever the p- their audiences wish to hear.

Before presenting \$1 billion U.N. (to help children, clear mines, and cure disease) Turner mention the grand gesture to- countants, one of whom was- soon after the event to the effe- although the intention was ma- to behold, an inspiration to u- was, perhaps, a trifle "impetuous- er analysts in other counting- thought that when the pled- been run through the mill of t- laws, the U.N. would be lucky- vage 10 cents on the dollar.

If what was important was- fect, then maybe the lesson- learned is one about our latt- moguls having become, at lo- and all thanks to the IRS at- L. L. Bean catalogue, harmle- domesticated creatures, incap- making wars or presidents.

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# HARPER'S INDEX

- Percentage change since last year in the number of U.S. senators and representatives who admit to being smokers : -22
- Number of legislators who drove foreign cars in Washington last year but used domestic cars at home : 74
- Percentage spending to be proposed next year in Michigan on one-way out-of-state bus fare for welfare recipients : \$1,372,000
- Percentage change since 1995 in total soft money raised nationally in the first six months of the election cycle : +29
- Number of years federal law limited congressional campaign spending before this was ruled unconstitutional in 1976 : 2
- Number of legal experts who declared the McCain-Feingold campaign finance bill to be constitutional : 126
- Number of people Senator Mitch McConnell said he could find "to swear the Earth is flat" : 126
- Percentage of the Flat Earth Society's membership this would represent : 3
- Percentage of the 8,658 man-made objects orbiting the Earth that have been classified as "debris" : 72
- Number of the four bombs aboard an Air Force jet lost in the Colorado Rockies last spring that have been found : 0
- Number of weapons depicted on Haiti's national flag : 10
- Percentage of Colombia's municipalities controlled by rebel groups : 58
- Number of options besides negotiation with them that Colombian president Ernesto Samper says he has left : 0
- Members of Mexico's PRD opposition party murdered since 1989 : 562
- Estimated percentage of North Korea's rural population that died of starvation this year : 15
- Number of the world's ten busiest McDonald's franchises that are in Russia or Hong Kong : 5
- Ratio of the number of prisoners per 100,000 people in China to the number per 100,000 in the U.S. : 2:5
- Number of Florida state prisons that have cell-door locks that can be broken by striking them with a shoe : 16
- Percentage change since last year in the number of prisoners beheaded in Saudi Arabia : +146
- Average number of American children injured by shopping carts each year : 21,600
- Percentage change since 1970 in the number of Americans employed by U.S. toy manufacturers : -40
- Chance that an American adult can name all of Santa's reindeer : 1 in 4
- Chances that a Chicago public school requires students to wear uniforms : 3 in 4
- Percentage change since 1966 in the number of U.S. college freshmen who say it is important to follow politics : -50
- Rank of the U.S. delegation among the largest foreign groups at this year's world youth festival in Cuba : 1 (see page 61)
- Year in which a U.S. secretary of state first advocated the annexation of Cuba : 1823
- Year in which the United States promised the U.S.S.R. that NATO would not expand : 1990
- Number of Turkish troops that crossed the Iraqi border last May to attack Kurds : 25,000
- Number of the ten largest U.S. newspapers that gave the story front-page coverage : 0
- Portion of Canada's 105 daily newspapers that are owned by Conrad Black : 1/2
- Number of *Squadron Supreme* comic books printed this year with ink containing its creator's ashes : 4,000
- Ratio of Americans who die each year in auto accidents to those who die from infections picked up in hospitals : 1:1
- Price of Hygiene Guard, an electronic system that monitors workers' lavatory use : \$1,500 (see page 28)
- Average number of seconds an American patient is allowed to speak before being interrupted by a doctor : 18
- Percentage of first-year medical students who believe a knowledge of nutrition is important to their career : 74
- Percentage of third-year medical students who believe this : 13
- Number of Krispy Kreme Doughnut "artifacts" on display at the Smithsonian : 48
- Rank of milk among professional Santas' favorite drinks with cookies, according to the American Dairy Association : 1
- Gallons of peppermint-flavored liquid Prozac prescribed this year : 27,012

Figures cited have been adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of October 1997. Sources are listed on page 8.

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COLUMBIA



# READINGS

[Essay]

## STILL LIVING IN A COLD-WAR WORLD

*From "Marooned in the Cold War: America, the Alliance, and the Quest for a Vanished World," by Mark Danner, in the Fall issue of World Policy Journal. Danner is the author of The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War.*

**T**hree years have passed since I stood in a marketplace in Sarajevo, notebook in hand, gazing through the chaos of smoke and running feet at the scores of dead heaped upon the earth. A mortar shell had sent long sheets of the market's ramshackle metal roof slicing through the crowd, instantly reducing what had been people to limbs and torsos and hunks of tissue. Beside me an enormous man in a black overcoat wept over the body of a woman lying at his feet, while two smaller men struggled to hold him back. Engaged in their arms, he turned his head toward the sky, and just as his hate-filled scream split my consciousness, I saw what he saw: a cluster of silver planes tracing their way elegantly overhead, the fighter planes of NATO, on patrol, "guarding" the besieged city of Sarajevo.

However complicated the story of the demise of the former Yugoslavia, history—like the man in the overcoat—will likely prove itself relatively uninterested in the details and focus instead on what was surely lacking on the part of the West during those years of war: the willingness to act. And historians will certainly

find no small irony in the fact that the Western countries would blame their collective inertia on the need to preserve a consensus in the very institution that had borne them unscathed through the treacherous half-century: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Having lost their Soviet adversary, the Western leaders had devised for the alliance a new role as guardian of European stability, then for four years they stood aside while an estimated 3,600,000 people were ethnically cleansed and 200,000 people died. Thus began the great post-Cold War era.

Of course, the "post-Cold War world" is a phrase that has fairly quickly become a cliché, and, like many clichés, it bears more scrutiny than it customarily receives. For although it has not escaped notice that the United States now lacks a "doctrine" to guide its foreign policy, and although officials of the Clinton Administration have struggled to create memorable phrases to characterize their presumably new approach to a presumably new world ("assertive multilateralism" was put forward, alas, during the Bosnia fiasco; "enlargement of market democracies" headed a more recent effort)—in broad outline America's policy toward the world remains a good deal more like that of the past four decades than different from it.

Despite their willful foot-dragging over Bosnia and their pretense that American troops will not remain there for many months to come, by all other signs American national-security planners remain determined to maintain "preponderant power" in the world—the phrase



first appeared in 1952 in the central Cold War planning document known as NSC-68—and to do so by means of a grand strategy that still depends on the forward basing of American troops: 114,000 in the heart of Europe; 90,000 in Asia, divided between Korea and Japan; 19,000 in the Middle East; and a grand armada of 12 aircraft carriers. A half-dozen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States shows no sign of abandoning the remnants of the once-vaunted “containment” poli-

cy. On the contrary, American security officials have worked hard to “delink” the need for U.S. troops in Europe from the Soviet menace, and have pushed to the fore, among other supposed new threats, “rogue states” such as North Korea, Iran, and Iraq. To support this post-Cold War hegemony the United States spends roughly \$275 billion a year on armaments and troops, an amount that exceeds that of the five next most heavily armed nations combined. And henceforth American defense spending is almost certain to rise. For now the other shoe has dropped: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has announced its intention to march east.

Last July, the leaders of the sixteen alliance countries met in Madrid and invited Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to join the same anti-Soviet organization that they had once, as Warsaw Pact members, manned the front line against. Although the United States has never considered these nations vital to its national interest, it will now undertake to guarantee their security with its own armed forces, to regard an attack on them as an attack on itself, and to repel such an attack with all its powers, including nuclear weapons. And it makes this commitment in the face of resentment and angry protests from Russian leaders, who, until this decision, had proved to be extraordinarily cooperative in reaching a favorable and stable settlement with the West.

How can we begin to account for this decision? During her Senate confirmation hearings, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared that Americans “must be more than audience, more even than actors; we must be the authors of the history of our age.” It was a statement of great ambition, phrased in the kind of exceptionalist language that has been so familiar in America’s history—and oftentimes so damaging to a clear-eyed vision of what America’s true resources and vital interests actually are.

Last February, Albright—self-proclaimed child of Munich, refugee from Nazism and Stalinism, and now America’s first female secretary of state—leaned forward over the conference table of the North Atlantic Council’s Great Hall in Brussels, gazed at the fifteen other foreign ministers gathered about her, and heralded the new world. “We have chosen as our common purpose to do for Europe’s east what NATO did fifty years ago for Europe’s west,” the secretary declared, “to integrate new democracies, eliminate old hatreds, provide confidence in economic recovery, and deter conflict.”

To “do for Europe’s east what NATO did fifty years ago for Europe’s west”? For a Czech-born stateswoman who lets pass no opportunity to underline her personal connection to the great European tragedies of this century, the

[Augury]

## THE DEAR LEADER’S WILD KINGDOM

*From a September 29 bulletin from the Korean Central News Agency, North Korea’s state-run news service. Kim Jong Il, son of former North Korean leader Kim Il Sung, who died in 1994, was confirmed as general secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea on October 8.*

**M**ysterious natural phenomena are being witnessed in different parts of Korea as provincial party conferences adopt resolutions recommending Kim Jong Il as general secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea. White flowers came into bloom on a pear tree, attracting butterflies and bees at a factory in Pyongyang on September 27. On their way to work, factory workers witnessed this phenomenon and said nature welcomes the festive event. More than 100 blossoms opened on an apricot tree near a film-processing plant in the city on that same day. Eighty-five blossoms were witnessed on apricot trees at a stock farm in Sangwon County on September 25. About 400 blossoms came into bloom on a twenty-year-old wild pear tree in a park in front of the Kaesong Municipal Party Committee building in the same period. On the morning of September 22, fishermen of the fishery station in Rajin-Sonbong city caught a 10-centimeter white sea cucumber while fishing on the waters off Chongjin. They said the rare white sea cucumber has come to hail the auspicious event of electing Secretary Kim Jong Il as party general secretary. Seeing the mysterious natural phenomena, Koreans say Secretary Kim Jong Il is indeed the greatest of great men produced by heaven and that flowers come into bloom to mark the great event.





Three photographs of U.S. pennies, by Moyra Davey, were on display in June at the Walter Phillips Gallery in Calgary, Alberta. Davey lives in Hoboken, New Jersey.

comparison seemed stunningly inapt. A half-century ago, Germany found itself in a state of utter devastation, its people clawing through ruins and brambles in search of scraps of food; France and Britain were financially and spiritually exhausted; and in the occupied states to the east, the soldiers of the Red Army crouched menacingly, the spearhead of a nation that had arisen triumphant from the war and now believed there was no power that could possibly oppose it.

Compare this dark world with the eastern Europe of today. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic enjoy democratic politics, however tenuously, and they are forcing their economies through various painful stages of transition to free-market systems. The Soviet Union has shattered into a congeries of fifteen separate states and the once-terrible Red Army has almost completely disintegrated: desertions, lack of money, and plummeting morale have meant that, far from threatening Europe, Russia, as the world saw demonstrated most horribly during the Chechnya war, can no longer even invade itself.

**I**f Albright's comparison seems foolish rhetoric, why then has NATO determined to move east, with all the political and financial expense that it will entail? On this question, the official voices of the Clinton Administration have been deeply confused, in part because different audiences—Europeans, east and west;

Russians; Americans—are being addressed, and the messages required to placate them contradict one another.

To the American and European publics, for example—and in part to the Russians as well—Clinton officials have offered what might be called the “one Europe” rationale. As Secretary Albright put it last spring, and reiterated at the Senate hearings on NATO expansion in October, the decision to extend a formerly hostile military alliance to the Russian border, far from threatening Russia's security, instead would produce “an undivided, democratic, and free Europe” and would “anchor Russia within a European system.” “This NATO,” the secretary has insisted, “is not directed against Russia.” In this new world, “it is not us versus them or them versus us. We are all on the same side.” How all these countries could be on the same side the secretary did not explain. As Henry Kissinger put it during a TV interview last July, Clinton officials “keep talking about the absence of dividing lines. With all due respect, that is nonsense. If you have an alliance, you have a dividing line.”

Of course, if one looks beyond the rhetoric of public relations—the eloquent appeals of east European leaders, the strivings of ambitious bureaucrats, the transitory demands of U.S. election campaigns—one finds that the plan to expand the alliance is indeed motivated by an “us versus them” mentality, and is the product of an exfoliating tree of assumptions



about Europe's past, Europe's probable future, and the inevitable behavior of powerful states. "If this request is rejected," writes Kissinger in the *Washington Post*, "and the states bordering Germany are refused protection, Germany will sooner or later seek to achieve its security by national efforts, encountering on the way a Russia pursuing the same policy from its own side. A vacuum between Germany and Russia threatens not only NATO cohesion but the very existence of NATO as a meaningful insti-

tution. NATO cannot long survive if the borders it protects are not threatened while it refuses to protect the borders of adjoining countries that do feel threatened."

Such reasoning carries a great ring of authority but is fraught with contradictions. Like many "realist" arguments, it pretends to set out timeless truths but instead is saturated with history. It broods about the grim past and the morbid future while ignoring almost entirely the possible present. It is not statesmanship. It is fatalism posing as realism.

A statesman might have proposed a different path. He might have insisted that the United States—by making full use of its diplomatic weight—persuade the Europeans to "protect" and "stabilize" the states of eastern Europe by integrating them firmly into their economic system, of which Germany forms the vigorous heart. He might have recognized that the arms-reduction agreements of the late 1980s and early 1990s had strongly bolstered the stability of central Europe, and understood that the key to preventing any so-called vacuum between Germany and Russia is to avoid taking a fateful and unnecessary military initiative sure to poison relations with the Russians at a time when their domestic politics are delicate in the extreme.

More broadly, the statesman might have asked himself whether the American people are committed to defending the countries of eastern Europe—whether Americans are willing to send their young people to fight in Poland or willing to launch their nuclear weapons to defend it. And, if they are not, he might have wondered what effect building such an empty guarantee into the alliance would eventually have. He might have acknowledged that the United States should look first of all after its own principal interests, and that those interests are broader than so-called NATO cohesion for its own sake. They are a stable and increasingly self-reliant Europe, with a prosperous and secure Germany at its center, and an unthreatened and unthreatening Russia.

It is not at all clear that rushing to absorb eastern Europe into the Western alliance at this time will advance those interests; in fact, the evidence thus far strongly suggests the contrary. Not only has the unprecedented collaboration between Washington and Moscow come to an abrupt halt but members of the Duma are now stalling ratification of the all-important START II agreement, which would reduce both sides' nuclear arsenals by more than two-thirds from Cold War levels. And although Russian leaders, given the state of their army and economy, were scarcely in a position to block the entry into the alliance of the eastern European countries, President Clinton, for rea-

[Dismissal]

## SNAIL MAIL

*From a letter sent in July from the U.S. Postal Service to Martha Cherry, an eighteen-year veteran mail carrier in White Plains, New York.*

Martha A. Cherry:

You are hereby notified that you will be removed from the Postal Service effective the close of business August 15. You are charged with "Unsatisfactory Performance Resulting in the Expansion of Street Time."

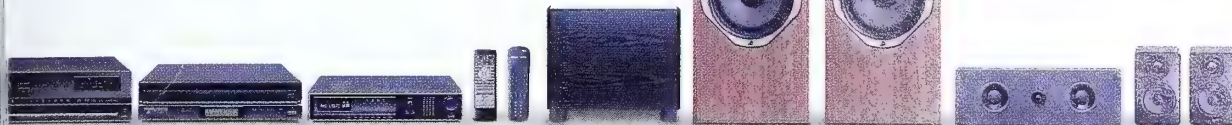
On June 9, you were accompanied on your street delivery duties by your supervisor. It was observed that on your route you took small steps that could be best described as "baby steps." You walked at a rate of 66 paces per minute with a stride of less than one foot. At each step, the heel of your leading foot did not pass the toe of the trailing foot by more than one inch. As a result, you required 13 minutes longer than your previously demonstrated ability to deliver mail to this section of your route.

You were again accompanied by your supervisor on July 1. On that occasion you took 17 minutes longer than your previously demonstrated ability to deliver mail to this segment of your route. During this observation you engaged in other time-wasting practices. You went to the back door of a house to determine if the resident had returned from being away. This took approximately 6 minutes. Then at approximately 2:00 P.M. you stopped delivering mail and proceeded to walk to the relay box at Doyer and Longview in order to get your boots and put them on. This was not necessary. It was a sunny day, warm temperature, no threat of rain, certainly not the type of weather that demanded that boots be worn.

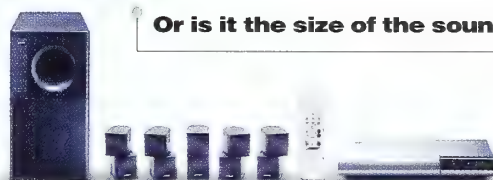


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[Testimony]

## G.O.P. SHOWGIRL

*From "Jorge at the Copa," a song played by Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R., Fla.) during her opening statement on the first day of the House campaign finance hearings in October. The lyrics, written by Scott Hogenson and recorded and sung by Paul Silhan to the tune of Barry Manilow's "Copacabana," describe an alleged attempt by Democratic Party contributor Vivian Mannerud to solicit donations from convicted cocaine trafficker Jorge Cabrera at the Copacabana Hotel in Havana. Cabrera claimed to have given \$20,000 to the Democratic National Committee in exchange for an invitation to a fund-raiser attended by Vice President Al Gore.*

His name was Jorge, Jorge Cabrera  
They say he ran a little coke and had good  
cigars to smoke  
He was a smuggler with lots of money  
But he had trouble in the past  
And his luck just couldn't last  
And so he went to see friends at the DNC  
He met with the finance people  
Who put on the squeeze!

[Chorus]

At the Copa, Copacabana  
The DNC's spot in Havana  
At the Copa, Copacabana  
Big checks and favors were always the flavors  
At the Copa... he anted up.

He met with Vivian, in from Miami  
She had connections in D.C., but they didn't  
come for free

So she told Jorge to meet with Al Gore  
Who said unless we win again  
There's no help that we can lend  
So Jorge grabbed his pen, and wrote a check  
again

Twenty grand bought him inside status  
And a White House friend!

[Chorus]

Then ten days later, there was a party  
On Pennsylvania Avenue at the house of you  
know who  
Where the First Lady posed for pictures  
With a smiling Jorge and Al Gore  
But the prints got out the door  
And now they're in the press and Clinton's in a  
mess

Jorge's spending time in jail  
We're all the rest'

sons known only to him, felt bound to grant the Russians extraordinary concessions in the Founding Act he signed with Boris Yeltsin last May in Paris, in which he vowed not to station foreign troops or nuclear weapons on the soil of the newly admitted countries. In addition, the Russians have been invited to share in making alliance decisions as a member of a new "Permanent Joint Council"—an astounding step that led Kissinger to remark acidly that "Russia seems to be achieving NATO participation before the new applicants."

By offering such sweeping concessions, President Clinton managed to create a "two-tiered" alliance, in which security guarantees granted the new members appear much weaker than those held by the old. Many American military officers originally opposed expansion because they feared precisely this: that admitting the eastern Europeans would create an imbalance that might threaten the entire system, rendering all of its guarantees less reliable. As Secretary Albright pointed out to the Senate in October, if Americans "were to wake up one morning to the sight of [eastern European] cities being shelled and borders being overrun, I am certain that we would choose to act, enlargement or no enlargement."

This is certainly true; but *how* we would act remains more ambiguous. To work as a deterrent, a firm NATO guarantee should expunge that ambiguity. Now, however, by admitting new members who may house on their soil neither nuclear weapons nor foreign troops, the alliance in effect has brought that ambiguity within its own chambers of decision, and this may ultimately undermine the guarantees upon which the current members depend.

Whatever the impact of these concessions on American security, they point to a much larger question: what will be the significance for us, as Americans? The United States has come to a critical crossroads, and before the country can move ahead its leaders and its citizens must reach agreement about the part their nation will now play in the world. Twice before during this century, in 1919 and in 1945, Americans have stood on such a precipice. Out of debates cluttered with ideological baggage emerged two very different views of the country's mission. What remained the same, however, was the rhetoric, the jargon of American exceptionalism. Now, as the Senate debates the amended treaty and as American taxpayers learn how much they will be expected to pay to modernize the Polish and Hungarian and Czech militaries, this rhetoric will once again echo loudly through the land. Must not Americans be, as Secretary





"Iktove, Hokkaido," sculpted and photographed by David Nash, whose work will be on display this spring at the LA Louver y in Venice, California. Nash lives in Blaenau-Ffestiniog, Wales.

Albright said, "the authors of their age"?

Imbued as we are with such romantic notions, it has become difficult to recognize that the answer to Albright's question is plainly no. Americans need not be the authors of their age. Americans have a choice to make, one that must be based on an informed discussion of interests and resources, not on a flurry of fine phrases. In the words we see flowing already from the Clinton Administration, we can make out the shape of the rhetoric to come, and it seems all too strangely familiar. Once again, we will be told that Americans, because they are Americans, must step boldly forward and bear the burden of leadership, for if they do not, who will? Is not America, after all, "the indispensable nation"?

We have in front of us a grave decision to make. It is a time for thinking, not poetry. If we must take as our starting point an image, however, let it not be that of some mythical "indispensable nation" but rather of something more timely and more telling: those silver fighter planes tracing their lazy arabesques in the blue sky, high above the carnage of bleeding Sarajevo.

[Recording]

## BACKSTAGE AT THE NATO SUMMIT

*From a conversation among Canadian prime minister Jean Chrétien, Belgian prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, and Luxembourg prime minister Jean-Claude Juncker that took place in July at the NATO summit in Madrid. While the NATO leaders awaited the late arrival of Bill Clinton to a signing ceremony for an accord with Ukraine, portions of their conversation were recorded, without their knowledge, by CBC cameraman Brian Kelly. Translated from the French by CBC senior correspondent Don Murray.*

JEAN CHRÉTIEN: What is shocking [about American politics]—and I follow this problem, I know the rules—is that nothing's done for reasons of state, it's all done for short-term political reasons, to win elections. Take the quarrel over whether to admit the Baltic states [into NATO]. That has nothing to do with world security. It's all because in Chicago, Mayor Daley controls lots of votes





*Front Porch with Cowboys and Indians* by Margaret Sutton, currently on display at the Lincolnton Arts and Science Center in Baton Rouge. Sutton lives in Durham, North Carolina.

for the [presidential] nomination.

Take Haiti. He [Clinton] goes to Haiti with soldiers [in 1994]. The next year Congress doesn't allow him to go back. So he phones me. Okay, I send my soldiers. Thank you very much. Afterward, I ask for something in exchange.

But it's delicate. He is so huge. Yesterday I had a good opportunity, and he was happy with me [for reportedly mediating a dispute between Clinton and French president Jacques Chirac over NATO enlargement]. And he came to talk to me: "Jean," he said, "you saved my bacon."

The American system. In your country or my country all the politicians would be in prison for selling their votes.

JEAN-LUC DEHAENE: Yes.

CHRÉTIEN: But they sell their votes. "You want me to vote for NATO?"

DEHAENE: "So vote for me on—"

CHRÉTIEN: "So I need you to build me a bridge in my electoral district." And that's what's incredible.

We have a problem with the fisheries in

British Columbia. So I meet him [Clinton] in Denver. Albright meets my foreign affairs minister. Let's say that we're asking twenty; they offer sixteen. So I say, "Oh, let's slice it down the middle." He says, "Yeah." So that's one problem out of the way. Then the negotiator says, "No." The negotiator says, "I cannot accept this without the consent of thirty-five different organizations, which all have veto power." That's how the country works.

JEAN-CLAUDE JUNKER: What if we started [the ceremony] without them [the U.S. delegation]?

DEHAENE: To prove that we know what to do without them.

JUNKER: To prove we're independent. He [Chrétien] is used to not doing what they want.

CHRÉTIEN: I make it my policy. It's popular. The Cuba affair [the Helms-Burton Act, which places sanctions on countries that trade with Cuba], I was the first to stand up against it. People like that. But you have to do it carefully.



[Interceptions]

## EAVESDROPPING ON THE WHITE HOUSE

*From a transcript of pager messages exchanged on April 27 by members of a White House entourage stationed in Philadelphia for Bill Clinton's attendance that day at the President's Summit for America's Future. The unencrypted messages were intercepted by a computer hacker and given to Pam Finkel, an adviser to the hacker quarterly 2600. According to Finkel, who published the transcript on the Internet in September to coincide with congressional negotiations on the Security and Freedom through Encryption Act, "This incident shows that the President's policy on encryption is so poorly crafted that it could have even jeopardized his own security." The administration has strongly resisted more liberal use of encryption, which civil-liberties advocates favor as the mode of protecting electronically transmitted personal data. In the transcript below, the recipient of each message is identified by numeric code; the senders occasionally identify themselves in the text of their transmissions. Transmissions broadcast to more than one member of the entourage are unaccompanied by numeric codes.*

10:14 A.M.

EAGLE [Bill Clinton] DEPART PHILLY AIRPORT 1012 AM

10:27 A.M.

EAGLE CALL MR BOB DOLE

10:28 A.M., #5517

CALL TAMMIE AT 832-0200. SHE IS LOCKED OUT OF THE ROOM. NO KEY IS AT THE HOTEL

10:36 A.M.

EAGLE ARRIVE FOSTER STADIUM

11:36 A.M., #5532

WHAT IS YOUR LOCATION, 1ST LADY WAITING

11:49 A.M., #5532

YOUR CAR IS BEING TOWED. RETURN ASAP

11:59 A.M., #4489

YOUR FAMILY GOT A GREAT TOUR OF AF-1. PAGE IF YOU NEED ME. JOHN

12:10 P.M., #5517

PLS CALL YOUR MOM

12:46 P.M., #5743

IF YOU DON'T COME BACK WITH 6 OF THOSE T-SHIRTS DON'T COME TO THE SWBD [roving telephone switchboard]

1:39 P.M., #2115

CALL HOME FOR JOKE OF THE HOUR

1:39 P.M., #4844

LATE. KEEP BUFFET OPEN FOR PRESS

2:04 P.M., #5517

CALL YOUR MOTHER

2:09 P.M., #4855

CALL SARA DARCEY WLVI TV BOSTON

RE: WELD NOM. URGENT

2:28 P.M., #2570

ARE YOU THINKING OF ME BECAUSE I AM THINKING OF U!

2:30 P.M., #2570

CALL ME IF U CAN. I HAVE A 2 HR PHONE WATCH...MISS U

2:30 P.M., #2034

DON'T FORGET TO PAGE ME TONIGHT WHEN YOU WANT ME IN YOUR ROOM

2:34 P.M., #4489

MINOR HOSTAGE SITUATION IN TEXAS...NOT MUCH KNOWN NOW... WILL ADVISE

2:37 P.M., #2684

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP

2:42 P.M.

EAGLE DEPART FOSTER STADIUM EN ROUTE WYNDHAM HOTEL

3:04 P.M., #5381

SCHMUCK, HOW'S IT HANGIN??? TOOTLES

3:45 P.M., #4412

USSS [U.S. Secret Service] WANTS THE RYDER TRUCK MOVED FROM THE 17TH STREET ENTRANCE—ANTHONY

3:57 P.M., #4096

POTUS RESTING, FROM HANLIN

4:26 P.M., #2513

GOING TO GET DRUNK...DAN

4:40 P.M., #2828

WHERE IS THE FOOOOOOD

4:44 P.M., #2418

GET A DIET PEPSI AND A TASTYCAKE FOR LINDA

6:41 P.M., #5320

FLO MCAFEE IS TRYING TO LOCATE HER LUGGAGE; IT CAME ON AIR FORCE 1, CALL STF OFC

7:09 P.M., #2034

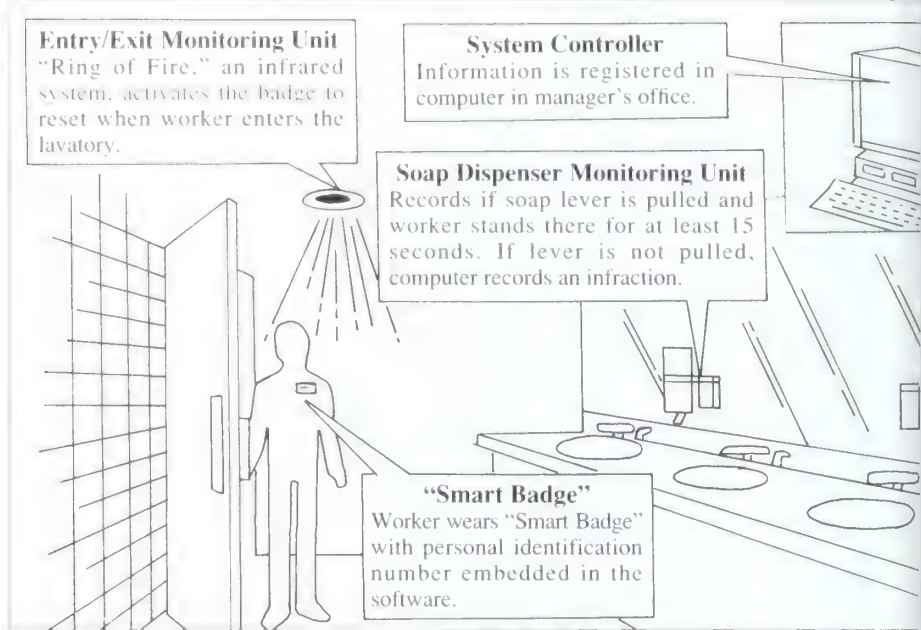
YOU ARE VERY CUTE!!!

7:25 P.M., #4013

PLS CALL PHILLY SIG [roving White House]



## BIG BROTHER IN THE BATHROOM



The above diagram is of Hygiene Guard, a "hand washing documentation system" produced by Net/Tech International, Inc. The system requires employees to wear "smart badges," which are activated by an infrared "ring of fire" when the employee enters the bathroom. If the employee does not use the soap dispenser or stands in front of the sink for fifteen seconds, the "infraction" is relayed to a manager's computer. Net/Tech has installed the system, which they will be selling for \$1,500, at the Tropicana Casino and Resort in Atlantic City. They report that the casino has never seen such hand washing.

FOR MARY STEAMVIRGIN FOR 1ST LADY

7:53 P.M.

EAGLE DEPART WYNDHAM HOTEL EN  
ROUTE CONVENTION CENTER

7:55 P.M., #4597

AM I STILL GOING BACK ON AF-1. CAN  
YOU WORK ISSUE...PITTARD

7:56 P.M.

EAGLE ARRIVE CONVENTION CENTER

8:12 P.M., #4146

SIR, BULLS 109, BULLETS 104, JORDAN 55  
POINTS

8:17 P.M., #2107

¿DONDE ESTA, MUCHO HUNGRY

8:30 P.M., #4489

YOU ARE CONFIRMED ON ANGEL [Air  
Force One], DEP 1645 EN ROUTE AN-  
DREWS AFB. RICHARDSON

8:59 P.M., #4146

EAGLE CALL CHELSEA CLINTON HOLD-  
ING

9:04 P.M., #4146

CHELSEA STILL HOLDING

9:31 P.M., #2845

MRS CHELSEA AND MRS CLINTON  
TALKING AT THIS TIME

9:49 P.M., #2570

TRY NOT TO DROOL ON TOO MANY  
PEOPLE, AND REMEMBER I MISS U!!!

9:51 P.M., #5320

HI ANTHONY! DID YOU FORGET  
ABOUT ME? IT'S TAMMIE AND I AM ON  
THE 2ND FLOOR

10:16 P.M., #2570

SORRY I HUNG UP ON U, I SWITCHED  
LINES WITHOUT PUTTING U ON

10:36 P.M., #2570

I GUESS I AM GOING TO SLEEP AND  
DREAM ABOUT U

10:54 P.M., #2222

WHERE ARE YOU MAN?

11:09 P.M., #2222

WHERE ARE YOU? ARE YOU ALIVE



[Elegy]

## THE O.S. IN TWILIGHT

*From Close to the Machine: Technophilia and Its Discontents, by Ellen Ullman, published by City Lights Books. Ullman is a software engineer who lives in San Francisco; her essay "Getting Close to the Machine" appeared in the June 1995 issue of Harper's Magazine.*

**O**ld: in computing we don't know what to do with the word. It does not belong; it reeks of mortality; we can't wait to be rid of it. We throw away old hardware. Old programmers, their once cutting-edge knowledge grown obsolete, give way to twenty-year-olds who think in ways the old only vaguely understand. In every trade weekly that comes through my mail slot is a shifting outline of the future; in the gathering piles of newsprint on the floor, a compendium of the past.

Only software gets to age. Too much time is invested in it; too much time will be needed to replace it. Rather than tossing old software out, we tinker with it: we mend and fix, patch and reuse. Software is almost homey; our approach to it, almost housewifely. We say that it has a "life cycle": from birth to productive maturity to bug-filled old age.

I once worked on a mainframe-computer application that had been written in a programming language called COBOL. The program was sixteen years old when I inherited it. Its fan-folded listing stood as high as a person. According to the library logs, ninety-six programmers had worked on it before I arrived. I spent a year wandering its subroutines and service modules, but there were still mysterious places I dared not touch. There were bugs in this system that no one had been able to fix for ten years. There were sections where adding a single line of code created odd and puzzling outcomes that programmers call "side effects," bugs that come not directly from the added code but from some later, unknown permutation further down in the process. This program was near the end of its "life cycle." It was close to death. Yet the system could not be thrown away. Its users depended on it.

By the time a computer system becomes old, no one completely understands it. Thus, paradoxically, a system made out of old junky technology becomes precious. It is kept running as if it were in a velvet box: Open it carefully. Just look, don't touch.

The preciousness of an old system is axiomat-

ic. The longer the system has been running, the greater the number of programmers who have worked on it and the less any one person understands it. As years pass, the system takes on a life of its own. It does useful work. However

[Prediction]

## ORGASMATRON

*From "Impacts of Robotic Sex," by Joel Snell, in the July/August issue of The Futurist: A magazine of forecasts, trends, and ideas about the future. Snell teaches social sciences at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.*

**R**obots that provide sexual companionship are likely to become common in the future. Reportedly, prototype models have already been developed in Japan. The future "sexbots" will have humanlike features and will be soft and pliant. Sexbots will contain vibrators to provide tactile stimulation and sound systems to provide love talk. They could certainly alter human relations in any or all of the following ways:

- Marriages may be destroyed by sexbots when husbands choose sex with the sexbots rather than with their wives. Jealous wives may destroy sexbot rivals and sue the manufacturer.

- Heterosexual people may use same-sex sexbots to experiment with homosexual relations. Or gay people might use other-sex sexbots to experiment with heterosexuality.

- Robotic sex may become addictive. Sexbots would always be available and never say no. People may become obsessed by their ever faithful, ever pleasing sexbot lovers and rearrange their lives to accommodate their addictions. Eventually, support groups will likely form.

- Technovirgins will emerge. An entire generation of humans may grow up never having had sex with other humans.

- Robotic sex may become "better" than human sex. Like many other technologies that have replaced human endeavors, robots may surpass human technique; because they would be programmable, sexbots would meet each individual user's needs.

Will electronic and robotic sex reduce teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, abortions, pedophilia, and prostitution? The jury is still out on these implications. However, boundaries, barriers, and beliefs will be challenged.



badly, however buggy, however obsolete it runs. The system's very functioning demands that we stop treating it as some mechanism we've created and start to recognize it as a being with a life of its own. We no longer control it.

[Statement of Purpose]

## A SAFE HAVEN FOR MARLBORO KIDS

*From the opening statement for the Web site "Allison's Teen Smoking Home Page."*

**H**i. My name is Allison. I'm thirteen years old, from Massachusetts, and, of course, a smoker. I've been smoking since I was ten years old. Luckily my mother was very accepting of my smoking when she found out. Many teens and preteens have to sneak around for years, hiding their smoking from their parents until they're older. The purpose of this Web page is to give all teen smokers a home. Here you'll find pictures of teens and kids smoking, links to other pages about teen smoking, and messages from teen smokers to other teen smokers.

I didn't start smoking because of peer pressure or because of Joe Camel. I also didn't start because I wanted to look older or more sophisticated. I started because I was curious, and I continue to smoke because I like to. The government says that 3,000 kids start smoking every day, and I don't think that number will be coming down anytime soon.

I usually smoke Marlboro Mediums or Marlboro Reds. Once in a while I'll buy a pack of Camels or Winstons. I smoke about a pack and a half a day, usually more on the weekends. The majority of my family smokes, including my mom and my younger sister, Katie. She just turned eleven. Originally she was a total anti-smoker. Every time she saw me smoking she would try to lecture me. Then about a year ago, after she started middle school, Katie got more and more curious about smoking. Eventually she asked me if she could try one of my cigs. I let her...and...of course...she liked it. And now she's hooked, too. My mother was just as accepting of her smoking as she was of mine. Katie smokes about a pack a day of Newport Lights. We all smoke. In the house, in the car, with other family members, whenever we need to.

We have two choices: respect it or kill it.

Old systems have a name. They are called "legacy systems." In the normal world, "legacy" has an aura of beneficence. It is an offering between generations, an enrichment. A gift of time, venerability, the patina of age but good age.

In computing, however, "legacy" is a curse. A legacy system is a lingering piece of old junk that no one has yet figured out how to throw away. It's something to be lived with and suffered. The system is unmodifiable, full of bugs, no longer understood. We say that it is "brain dead." Yet it lives. It runs. Drain on our time and money. Vampire of our happiness. *Legacy.*

[Censure]

## THE HARRYING MAN

*From a September 17 letter from actor Alec Baldwin to Bernard Weinraub, the West Coast cultural correspondent for the New York Times. The Times declined to publish the letter.*

Dear Mr. Weinraub:

I read your recent article regarding L.A. Confidential with great interest and was immediately struck by your reference to my wife, Kim Basinger, "behaving temperamentally" on the set of *The Marrying Man*.

Here you have a woman who has worked diligently and conscientiously in motion pictures and television for nearly twenty years and has had only one incident in which someone complained. One incident—seven years ago! And let's not forget that the situation arose while making a movie for the Prince of Darkness, Jeffrey Katzenberg.

Since you write for the *Times*, I suppose I have always had somewhat inflated expectations of you and your writing. Yet time and again, you prove yourself to be not only an untalented writer and a studio lapdog but a petty and small-minded man as well. Your corporate fealty and tired, hackneyed prose have actually crystallized into what is now recognized by most people as the "Bernard Weinraub piece," which includes:

- Bitchy, unattributed quotes from some windbag producer about the true value of actors as opposed to stars.

- A restatement, for the fiftieth time, of some public-relations reversal or perceived faux pas (rehab, divorce, box-office flops) of an actor who is currently out of favor and thus powerless.

- Assertions that Hollywood studio executives are bold, risk-taking creative engineers who drive





Wars: A Tale of Two Sodas, by Chris Woods, whose work is currently on display at the Diane Farris Gallery in Vancouver. Woods lives in Chilliwack, British Columbia.

the business forward to ever-greater shares of the global entertainment market, all the while avoiding serious analysis of their personal failings at the helms of publicly traded companies.

You get the picture. Why don't you do yourself, the *New York Times*, and everyone else in this business a favor: either become a better, braver, more ethical writer or quit your fucking job and go work for a studio, since that is basically what you are doing right now.

Very sincerely,  
Alec Baldwin

[Precepts]  
**A PAINTER'S WISDOM**

"The Social Stance of the Artist by the Black Tightrope Walker," written by the painter Max Beckmann in 1927, from *Self-Portrait in Words: Collected Writings and Statements*, published by the University of Chicago Press.

1. The talent for self-promotion is a prerequisite for those inclined to pursue the artistic calling.

2. The budding genius must learn above all else to respect money and power.

3. A reverence for critical authority must dominate his life. He must strictly adhere to his subservient standing and never forget that art is merely an object, the purpose of which is to facilitate the critic's realization of his critical potential.

4. The riskiest thing an artist can have is too strong a backbone. Woe betide that miserable creatively inclined creature who is unable to subdue his obdurate spinal column in the course of daily bowing and scraping.

5. Let him therefore take cognizance of the fact that he is a subservient member of society. His demands can, of course, be taken under consideration only when society's more essential needs for a family car and a vacation trip to the Pyramids have been satisfied.

6. The artist may take quiet pleasure in his craft. Let him not, however, forget that fashion changes every five years. He would therefore do well not to indulge in all that much "quiet pleasure" and to stay well informed of every new set of marching orders.

7. Aside from the talent for self-promotion, the most important asset an artist can have is a girlfriend or a beautiful wife. Her utility can be imagined in a variety of ways. Who other than



the artist's beloved could better soothe the transaction-riddled, multinational-takeover-scheme-saturated, cosmic thunder-stricken brain of the champagne manufacturer or leather dealer? With her gentle hand she can stroke the mighty one's chaotic brow and, resting him against her soft body, induct him into the mysteries of dreaming and art.

8. The artist can know nothing of religion, politics, and life. He must not forget the sylph-like presence that he is, his only purpose consisting in sprinkling the world with brightly colored pollen. The "merry little artist folk" had best keep in mind their humble limitations. It is therefore advised that should the unfortunate artist have been endowed by nature with a little sense and a modicum of critical faculty he keep these qualities to himself. Only insofar as he maintains an aura of artlessness can the artist expect to be recognized by the public.

9. The best thing an artist can do, of course,

is to die. Only when the last living vestige of this bothersome personality has disintegrated in his grave can his fellow men take pleasure in his work. Only then does the artist's work truly belong to his contemporaries, for if they buy it at the right time it is as good as if they had made it. The artist is therefore strongly advised to die at the right time. Only thereby can he put the finishing touches on his work.

10. The artist who follows these fundamental precepts will have a good life. His fellow men will gladly accord this well-respected and untroublesome element in the fabric of the state all the love and recognition he deserves.

[Poem]

## A LONG ILLNESS

*From a poem by Donald Hall in the September issue of The Boston Book Review. It will appear in Without, a collection of Hall's poems about the death of his wife, the poet Jane Kenyon, to be published in April 1998 by Houghton Mifflin. Hall lives in Danbury, New Hampshire.*

Daybreak until nightfall  
he sat by his wife at the hospital  
while chemotherapy dripped  
through the catheter into her heart.  
He drank coffee and read  
the *Globe*. He paced; he worked on poems;  
he fretted; he rubbed her back  
and read aloud. Overcome with dread  
they wept and affirmed  
their love for each other, witlessly,  
over and over again.  
When it snowed one morning Jane gazed  
at the darkness blurred  
with flakes. They pushed the IV pump  
which she called Igor  
slowly past the nurse's pods, as far  
as the outside door  
so that she could smell the snowy air.

♦  
Home a week. He looked  
back in the calendar. February  
was slashed kitty-corner  
with Jane's shaky large block capitals  
staggering eight letters  
out: L E U K E M I A

♦  
Alone together a moment  
on the twenty-second anniversary  
of their wedding,  
he clasped Jane as she stood

[Self-evaluation]

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING OSCAR

*From a previously unpublished questionnaire completed by Oscar Wilde in 1877, when he was twenty-three and an undergraduate at Oxford. The manuscript was sold in June by Christie's for \$36,500.*

What is your aim in life?

Success, fame, or even notoriety.

Who are your favorite poets?

Euripides, Keats, Theocritus, and myself.

What is your favorite occupation?

Reading my own sonnets.

What is your idea of happiness?

Absolute power over men's minds, even if accompanied by a chronic toothache.

What is your idea of misery?

Living a poor and respectable life in an obscure village.

What do you believe to be your distinguishing characteristic?

Inordinate self-esteem.

What traits of character do you most detest?

Vanity, self-esteem, conceitedness.





"Bahannock," by Charlottesville, Virginia, artist Bill Emory. The photograph was most recently on display at the Mid Street Gallery in Charlottesville.

at the sink, pressing  
into her backside, rubbing his cheek  
against the stubble  
of her skull. He gave her a ring  
of pink tourmaline  
with nine small diamonds around it.

She put it on her finger  
and immediately named it Please Don't Die.

They kissed and Jane  
whispered, "Timor mortis conturbat me."

He hovered beside Jane's bed,  
solicitous: "What can I do?"

It must have been unbearable  
while she suffered her private hurts  
to see his worried face  
looming above her, always anxious to *do*  
*something* when there was  
exactly nothing to do. Inside him,  
some four-year-old  
understood that if he was good—thoughtful,  
considerate, beyond  
reproach, *perfect*—she would not leave him.

Why were they not  
contented, four months ago, because  
Jane did not have

leukemia? A year hence, would he question  
why he was not contented  
now? Therefore he was contented.

They flew all day across  
the country to the hospital for hard cases.

The night before Jane  
entered isolation in Seattle for chemo,  
TBI, and a stranger's  
bone marrow—for life or death—they slept  
together, as they understood,  
maybe for the last time. His body  
curved into Jane's,  
his knees tucked to the backs of her knees;  
he pressed her warm soft thighs,  
back, waist, and rump, making the spoons,  
and the spoons clattered  
with a sound like the end man's bones.

As they killed her bone  
marrow again, Jane lay on a gurney  
alone in a leaden  
room between machines that resembled  
pot-bellied stoves,  
spewing out Total Body Irradiation  
for eleven half-hour  
sessions measured over *two*



It was then she capped  
the tube and stapled with her body

The courier brought  
bone marrow in an insulated bottle  
from the donor, a nameless  
thirty-nine-year-old female who  
sent along words  
for nameless Jane, "To the Recipient."

Jane's "For the Donor" flew  
back somewhere, where a stranger lay flat  
with an anesthetic  
hangover and pelvic bones that ached—  
and with disinterested  
love, which is the greatest of these.

Eighteen inches from  
his nose, pink liquid leached through a tube  
from a six-inch-square  
plastic envelope. It was Day Zero.

By Day Eleven, mucositis  
from the burn of Total Body Irradiation  
frayed her mouth apart  
cell by cell, her lips and tongue peeled.

To enter her antibiotic  
cube it took him fifteen minutes  
to suit up, wearing a wide  
paper hat, yellow mask, long white  
booties like a Dallas  
Cowgirl, blue paper surgical gown,  
and sterile plastic gloves.  
Jane said he looked like a huge condom.

He woke at five, brewed  
coffee, swallowed pills, injected insulin,  
shaved, ate breakfast, packed  
the tote with Jane's sweats he washed  
at night, filled the thermos,  
and left the apartment on Spring Street  
to walk a block and a half  
to Jane's bone-marrow floor of the hospital.  
Waiting for the light  
to cross the avenue, briefly he imagined  
throwing himself in front  
of that bus. He knew he wouldn't.

Discharged at last,  
she returned to sleep with him again  
in the flat jerry-built  
for bald tenants and their caregivers.

He counted out meds  
and programmed pumps to deliver  
hydration, TPN,  
and ganciclovir. He needed to learn  
from Maggie Fisher the nurse  
how to assemble the tubing, to insert  
narrow ends into

wide ones. "From long experience," Maggie  
told him, "I have learned  
to distinguish 'male' from 'female.'"

As Dr. McCormick plunged  
the tube down her throat, her body thrashed  
on the table. When she  
struggled to rise, the doctor's voice cajoled,  
"Jane, Jane," until  
blood-oxygen numbers dropped toward zero  
and her face went blue.  
The young nurse slipped oxygen into Jane's  
nostrils and punched  
a square button. Eight doctors burst  
into the room, someone  
pounded Jane's chest, Dr. McCormick  
gave orders like  
a submarine captain among depth charges,  
the nurse fixed  
a nebulizer over Jane's mouth and nose—  
and she breathed.

Meanwhile,  
understanding that his wife might be dying  
before his eyes, he stood still,  
careful to keep out of everyone's way.

Jane wasn't certain  
where she was, the month or the year, or who  
was president. An ambulance  
took her from the clinic two blocks  
back to the hospital.  
Her thinking returned slowly. With it came  
depression, the desire  
to die with her mother, and loathing  
for the view of Seattle  
from an eleventh-floor window  
that for the autumn  
had given her pleasure: "I hate this city."  
She spoke to him in anger:  
"I wish you could feel what I feel!"

Her only rebuke became  
his nightmare: At Eagle Pond, Jane  
sprayed his body with acid  
from a booby trap. He was dying.

He followed her in his rage  
to Connecticut and his mother's house.

Just before he woke he saw  
Jane crouched in terror at the bottom  
of the cellar stairs while he  
crept down, his hands clutched to choke her.

At five every afternoon  
Jane started to fret or panic.

On a Monday he lay  
on the sofa with mild vertigo,  
but Jane was certain  
it was a heart attack or embolism,  
no matter what he said.





*Lyn on a Bed*, by Montreal artist Paul Fenniak. His work will be on display next fall at the Forum Gallery in New York City.

Paramedics from an ambulance took  
his EKG for Jane's sake.  
A day later, Jane couldn't stand or walk.  
Back in the hospital  
she believed that she had never been sick,  
and would be discovered,  
and that Blue Cross and the Hutch would sue  
and take away their house.  
It did not matter what he told her,  
but Haldol and Klonopin  
mattered. For two hours she dozed; when  
she woke, she no longer  
insisted, "I am a wicked person."

At home each day budged  
forward—more calories (Ensure Plus,  
cream cheese and jelly,  
macaroni and cheese), more exercise  
(two hundred yards  
joyous walking with Gus), and, tentatively,  
the first phrases  
dictated toward what might be a poem.

They hired a movie each  
afternoon—Jane could read a short story

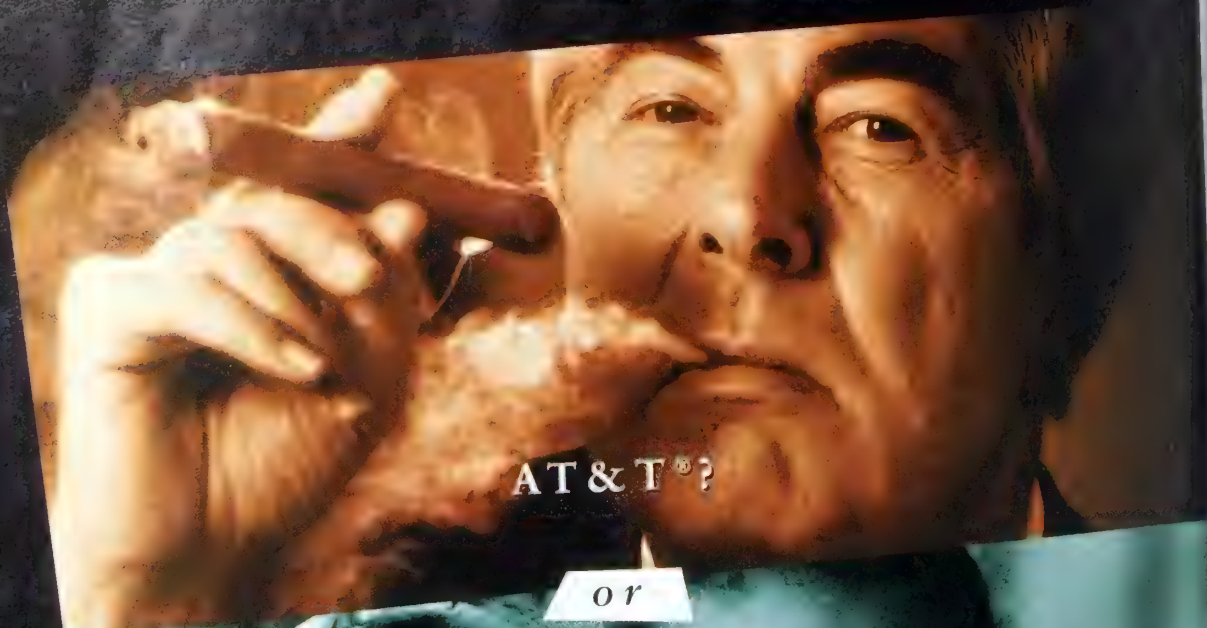
for half an hour—and at bedtime  
he helped her take off her sweatpants  
and pull on the blue-striped  
flannel nightgown Caroline gave her.

It was reasonable  
to expect that in ten or twelve months  
she would be herself.  
She would dress and eat her breakfast.  
She would drive her Saab  
to shop for groceries and lunch. Ashamed,  
he foresaw how intensely  
he would miss the months of taking care.

"It was reasonable  
to expect." So he wrote. The next day,  
in a consultation room,  
Jane's hematologist Letha Mills sat down,  
stiff, her assistant  
Diane standing with her back to the door.  
"I have terrible news,"  
Letha told them. "The leukemia is back."  
There's nothing to do."  
The four of them wept. He asked how long,  
why did it happen now . . .  
Jane asked only: "Can I die at home?"



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# BIOCAPITALISM

What price the  
genetic revolution?

By David Shenk

About a year ago, my wife phoned to say that something might be wrong with our unborn child. A blood test suggested the possibility of Down syndrome, and the doctor was recommending amniocentesis and genetic counseling. As it happened, I was almost finished writing a book about the paradoxical nature of information technology—the strange realization that more, faster, even *better* information can sometimes do more harm than good. When my wife's obstetrician reported the alarming news, it seemed as though the God of Technology was already looking to settle the score. The doctor, after all, was merely reading from a computer printout. Test results poured over us in a gush of formulas and statistics. My wife's blood contained such-and-such a ratio of three fetal hormones, which translated statistically into a such-and-such increased chance of our child having an extra chromosome, a forty-seventh, which can cause severely limited intellectual capacity, deformed organs and limbs, and heart dysfunction. The amniocentesis would settle the matter for certain, allowing a lab technician to count the fetus's actual chromosomes. But there was a dark statistical specter here, too, a chance that the procedure itself would lead to a spontaneous miscarriage whether the fetus was genetically abnormal or not. Testing a healthy fetus to death: many times, in the days ahead, I wondered if I could come to terms with that ultracontemporary brand of senselessness. The computer thought it a risk worth taking: the chance of miscarriage was slightly lower than the chance of discovering Down syndrome. My wife and I put our faith in the computer.

*David Shenk is the author of Data Smog: Surviving the Information Glut, published in April by HarperCollins. His last piece for Harper's Magazine, "The Pedestal Sauce," appeared in the September 1995 issue.*



One of the seriously ill and unimpaired parents of children born with defective teeth will also produce children, every other one of which will come with none. The defective teeth in the first case have, nevertheless, remained healthy since neither alone seem related to Albinism, nor have they, usually, disappeared, slowly, and progressively, like the blood condition, for example, independent of measures to be adopted. Some children appear as quickly as they are conceived. Although the "hereditary" blood not was involved in the last 1900s, it probably will be as hereditary disease as a disease in a few years. The will, nevertheless, rather be required for a person's sampling of both cells' organs from the same blood, from that will be risk free for both mother and fetus. That's a check of healthy blood every generation will be for just for the sake of more, perhaps. It's all for so much more for much less.

For the well-situated citizen, Will we know too much? Federal and state genetic databases may ultimately be available as a topographical map. You may well be genetically "in" well before you know it, and the first test and a final result—death will not come easily to him; in his time, he will be a hero for the "wrong type of inferior blood" that afflicted his mother. Here we stray from the heretofore infelicitous label "The Book of Man," the colloquial term used by researchers to refer to a complete transcription of human genetic information that they once hoped to acquire, such a book as "what C. = Love, for we were made in a press, and 1944 = *The Abolition of Man*." The final task was when, "thus by science . . . by parental conditioning . . . has obtained full control over himself."

The pump may be used for legend and present facts and into the future. "A Book of Man" will not be finished for some time, if ever. But with the US government's launch support of the Human Genome Project, \$3 billion more in research print to map out and decode all of the estimated 100,000 human genes by the year 2000, genetic knowledge has suddenly become a national priority. For this generation, race to the map.

W

But we're not quite sure what we'll do when we're there, what the club will look like most of us do particularly want to imagine.

**W**e're peering into the human genome for good reasons, of course. With our new gallery of genetic knowledge, we will become healthier and longer-lived. But even with the few facts that we now have, there is much cause to worry about the unintended consequences of acquired knowledge. If genes are the biological machine code—the system—containing the instructions for each person's development and controlling the code portends the ability to fix the bugs and even add new features. When people worry about that we may soon be "playing God" it's because machine-creating has, even before, been able to upend nature's peremptory veto.

I have asserted that such absolute biotechnological power is corrupt, that it is the humanity of it – its inescapable duty to posterity. “It is not, they are not men,” he writes of future genetic “Conditioners.” “They are not men at all, stepping outside the line” – that is, outside the moral domain defined by “nature” – they have stepped into the void.” Although yet close to a moral void, we do, even at this primitive stage, have a duty, ethically, to step outside the line. Consider, for example, when my wife and I went in for amniocentesis, we did so with great understanding that we would abort our child if we discovered that he was carrying the extra chromosome, otherwise, there would be no point in doing amniocentesis. The fact that we did not abort, that he was born healthy with forty-six chromosomes and chromosomes on her brain and two legs – and two legs, *less*, is morally be the point. We had made one of them choices, to terminate. I suppose that I feel the need to claim to make that choice. I knew that, if



till haunted by the odd moral burden it imposed on me: *Here is a preview of your daughter. If she's defective, will you keep her?* We all want a world without Down's and Alzheimer's and Huntington's. But when the vaccine against these disorders takes the form of genetic knowledge and when that knowledge comes with a sneak preview of the full catalogue of weaknesses in each of us, solutions start to look like potential problems. With the early peek comes a transfer of control from natural law to human law. Can the U.S. Congress (which seems inclined to shrink, not expand, its dominion) manage this new enlarged sphere of influence? Can the churches or the media or the schools? The question just one obvious policy implication of this biotechnological advance beyond the Tao: The abortion debate, historically an issue in two dimensions (whether or not individuals should have the right to terminate a pregnancy), suddenly takes on a discomfiting third dimension. Would prospective parents who want a child be allowed to refuse a particular type of child?

From that perspective, I wonder if today's crude triple amniocentesis/amnio combination isn't just an early indication of the burdens likely to be placed on future generations of parents: the burden of knowing, the burden of choosing. I imagine my daughter, pregnant with her first child. Her phone rings. The doctor has reviewed the karyotype and the computer analysis. He is sorry to report that her fetus is carrying a genetic marker for severe manic-depressive illness, similar in character to that of my grandfather, who lived a turbulent and difficult life. Will she abort? Will she continue the pregnancy?

Of course, perhaps she is not yet pregnant. In keeping with the old mores of her day, she and her partner have fertilized a number of eggs in vitro, intending to implant the one with the best apparent chance for a successful gestation. The doctor calls with the karyotype results. It seems that embryos number 1 and 6 reveal a strong manic-depressive tendency. Will my daughter exclude them from possible implantation? The choice seems obvious, until the doctor tells her that embryos 1 and 6 are also quick-witted, whereas 2 and 3 are likely to be intellectually sluggish. Embryos 4 and 5, fourth and fifth embryos, by the way, are marked for extraordinary intelligence, early-onset hearing impairment, and a high potential for aggressive pancreatic cancer. Which, if any, should be implanted?

Now add a plausible economic variable: Suppose that my daughter gets a registered letter the next day from her health maintenance organization, advising her that she has been denied the karyotype and the analysis (both of which they typically pay for). The HMO cannot presume to tell her which embryos to implant, but she should know that if she chooses to implant embryo number 1 or 6, the cost of her child's manic-depressive illness will not be reimbursed, ever. Now that the genetic marker is on the record, it is officially a "preexisting condition"—in fact, the term has never been more appropriate.

Such are some of the genetic scenarios now being bandied about by geneticists, who, because of the Human Genome Project, are flush with funding—more than five percent of the project's fund, roughly \$1.5 billion, will be spent over fifteen years. It is being debated by social and ethical exploration committees that prompted Arthur Caplan, director of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Bioethics, to celebrate the HGP as the "fulfillment of a dream set for biotechnology." The Department of Energy, the National Institutes of Health, and the International Human Genome Organization are all committed to studying the social and ethical implications of genetic re-

WILL MY DAUGHTER BE ABLE TO CHOOSE AMONG SIX EMBRYOS, EACH WITH HIS OR HER OWN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES?





GIVEN GREAT POWER TO ALTER  
OUR OWN GENETIC DESTINY,  
WHAT LIMITS WILL WE SET  
FOR OURSELVES?

search. Popping up frequently are essays and conferences with titles like "Human Gene Therapy: Why Draw a Line?" "Regulating Reproduction" and "Down the Slippery Slope." While genetic researchers plod along their methodical dissection of chromosomes, bioethicists are leaping decades ahead, out of necessity. They're trying to foresee what kind of society we're going to be living in when and if the researchers are successful. Sheraton and Marriott conference halls, they pose the toughest questions they can think of. If a single skin cell can reveal the emotional and physical characteristics of an individual, how are we going to keep such information private? At what level of risk should a patient be informed of the potential future onset of a disease? Will employers be free to hire and fire based on information obtained from their prospective employees' karyotypes? Should a criminal defendant be allowed to use genetic predisposition toward extreme aggressiveness as a legitimate defense, or at least as a mitigating factor in sentencing?<sup>1</sup> Should privately administered genetic tests be regulated for accuracy by the government? (Currently, they are not.) Should private companies be able to patent the gene sequences they discover? Should children of sperm donors have the right to know the identity and genetic history of their biological fathers? The only limitation on the number of important questions seems to be the imagination of the inquirer.

Most fundamental of all, though, are questions regarding the propriety of futuristic gene-based medical techniques. Suppose for a moment

we had the power to select on the basis of, and possibly even alter, the genetic code that our genes do, as many expect, turn out to be extensive. What sort of boundaries should we set for ourselves? Should infertile couples be allowed to resort to a clone embryo rather than adopt a biological stranger? Should any couple have the right to choose the blond-haired embryo over the brown-haired embryo? Homosexuality over heterosexuality?<sup>2</sup> Should we try to "fix" albinism in the womb or the test tube? Cerebral deafness? Baldness? Crooked teeth? What about a heart defect that if left alone will likely give out after fifty years? Should doctors instead pursue a genetic procedure that would give the ill-fated embryo a heart prior to ninety-nine years?

To address these questions, bioethicists need to determine what competing interests are at stake. If a father wants a blue-eyed, stout-hearted son and is able to pay for the privilege, which will cause no harm to anyone else, what's the problem? Consider the prospect of a just-in-time genetics culture in which millions choose the same desirable genes. Thousands of years down the line, the diversity in the human gene pool could be diminished, while any potato farmer can tell you is no way to manage a species. While public policy generally arbitrates between

individual rights and social responsibilities, genetics raises a new paradigm: a struggle between contemporary humanity and our distant descendants.

<sup>1</sup> This question is not hypothetical. In February 1994, Stephen Mobley was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. In their appeal Mobley's lawyers argued that he had inherited a strong predisposition toward aggression. The appeal was rejected. But Deborah DePue, professor of law at Fordham University, believes that genetic evidence will be admitted in U.S. courts within a few years. "Given that so many people who commit homicides have histories of families with relatives who are also incarcerated," she said in the *Los Angeles Independent*, "I think it's just a matter of time before somebody tries it again."

<sup>2</sup> Dean Hamer, chief of the National Cancer Institute's gene-structure section, claims that scientists have discovered genetic markers for behaviors such as sexual orientation, thrill seeking, and neurosis. "Psychiatrists making diagnoses and prescribing drugs in the future will look at a person's DNA, just the way they now ask about family history," Hamer has said. Follow-up studies have been inconclusive.





SOME SCIENTISTS ARGUE  
AGAINST ANY LIMITS,  
PROPOSING WE DO EVERYTHING  
POSSIBLE TO BETTER OURSELVES

ne considerable support for legislation that would suppress some of the technologies draws its strength from a sense of moral indignation as well as from the fear of an alien future. In a *New Republic* essay entitled "The Wisdom of Repugnance," University of Chicago philosopher Kass argues for a permanent ban on human cloning, a ban grounded not in hysteria but in moral principle. "We are repelled by the prospect of cloning human beings not because of the strangeness or novelty of the undertaking," he writes, "but because we intuit and feel, immediately and without argument, the violation of things that we rightly hold dear."

On the other end of the spectrum, some scientists argue against any boundaries, proposing that whatever we can do to better ourselves is not only ethically appropriate but also imperative. "The potential medical benefits of genetic engineering are too great for us to let nebulous fears of the 'e drive policy,'" argues Gregory Stock, director of the Center for the Study of Evolution and the Origin of Life at UCLA. Stock and others contend that we know better than Nature what we want out of life, and we owe it to ourselves and future generations to seek genetic improvement as a component of social progress. In his article "Genetic Modifications," for example, Anders Sandberg, a young Swedish scientist and self-described "transhumanist," not only recommends the removal of genetic "defects" such as less harmful "undesirable traits" as drug abuse, aggression, and even tooth decay but proposes a wide selection of enhancements to benefit the entire race. Systemic improvements would involve reprogramming humans to be more resistant to aging, toxins, and fat. "Cosmetic modifications" would be the plastic surgery for the next millennium—alteration of hair color, eye color, skin color, muscular build, and so on. Sandberg even fancies deluxe new features such as built-in molecular support for frozen cryonic suspension. We can chuckle now at the improbability of these ideas, but when we do we might also try to imagine how people might have reacted 150 years ago (before electricity, before the telegraph) to someone suggesting that people in the late twentieth century would routinely converse with people on other continents using portable devices the same size and weight as an empty coin purse. "It basically means that there are no limits," Princeton biologist Lee Silver remarked after the announcement of Dolly, the cloned sheep. "It means all of science fiction is true. They said it could never be done and now here it is, done before the year 2000."

**T**he attitude within the ranks of the Human Genome Project community is, not surprisingly, quite a bit more conservative than Sandberg's. Where in the project summaries will an affiliated researcher be found bragging publicly for a world filled with fat-proof, freezable people (although no one seems to have misgivings about any conceivable genetic engineering of pigs, cows, or other nonhumans). More modestly, the stated hopes for the application of gene mapping include a greater understanding of DNA and all biological organisms; new techniques for battling genetic diseases; a new prevention-oriented type of medicine; and a payoff for agribusiness and other biotech industries.

The fact that researchers are careful to limit their publicly stated goals reflects not so much a deeply ingrained social ethic, says Arthur Caplan, a canny political awareness. "If uncertainty about what to do with new knowledge in the realm of genetics is a cause for concern in some quarters," he writes in the book *Gene Mapping*, "then those who want to proceed quickly with mapping the genome might find it prudent to simply insist that any application of new knowledge in genetics is imminent or promise to forbear from any controversial applications of this knowledge. . . . [This] is the simplest strategy if one's aim is not applying new knowledge but merely to be allowed to proceed to acquire it." Caplan also exposes a built-in tension between researchers and ethicists. Ethic-





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THE WARNINGS ABOUT  
PLAYING GOD ARE IRRELEVANT,  
SINCE WE'RE ALREADY PLAYING  
GOD IN SO MANY WAYS

cists need to raise concern, but researchers lose funding if too many people get too worried.

Spotlighting the personal motivations of their researcher counterparts might seem a little beyond the purview of bioethicists, but in fact bioethicists are obliged, as part of the exploration of propriety, to not only consider the ideal social circumstances of genetic engineering but also to consider the more probable landscape for it, an approach we might call *Real Ethik*. To simply declare certain procedures immoral and call for an immediate and permanent ban is to ignore brazenly the history of technology, one lesson of which might fairly be summarized as "If it can be done, it will be done." E.g., the atomic bomb. The genie found its way out of its bottle in short order, almost instantaneously revolutionizing the way we think about conflict. *Real Ethik* dictates that other genies will escape from their bottles no matter what we do to stop them. Glenn McGee, a Catholic protégé at the University of Pennsylvania and the architect of what he calls a "pragmatic approach" to genetics, argues that while we may be able to revolutionize our technology, there is no escape from human nature. We're wasting our time, says McGee, huffing and puffing about an international ban on human cloning. "Get over it. It's not going to happen. We are fundamentally in an unpoliceable realm." Human cloning will occur, probably in Chelsea Clinton's lifetime. And considering the current trajectory of genetic research, so will a host of other exotic and frightening developments.

If one accepts McGee's worldview, genethical considerations are abruptly from policies of stark authorization/prohibition to a web of negotiation and incentive, from ultimatums to real diplomacy, from grandstanding to nuance and compromise. Instead of regarding advanced genetic engineering as taboo, as a eugenic catastrophe waiting to happen, one plunges straight into the facts, and works to maximize the general social welfare and to minimize harm. From the pragmatic perspective, the warning about "playing God" is a distracting irrelevance, since we're already playing God in so many ways. In Escondido, California, for example, the Repository for Germinal Choice, a.k.a. the "Nobel sperm bank," collects and distributes sperm from an exclusive group of extraordinary men—athletes, scientists, executives, and so on. A number of clinics in the United States now enable prospective parents to sex-select their children in advance of fertilization, sorting "male" (Y chromosome) sperm from "female" (X chromosome) sperm according to their volume and electrical charge, with an estimated success rate of 90 percent.

What about the horrifying prospect that parents might react irresponsibly to the genetic sneak preview of their fetus or embryo? That genie has escaped already, too. In what has become a powerful cautionary tale in bioethicist circles, an American couple was advised recently that their fetus had a rare extra chromosome that would *not* cause a debilitating disease like Down syndrome but that potentially, *possibly*, was linked to tall stature, severe acne, and aggressive—even criminally aggressive—behavior. The couple responded to this information by aborting their child. Their decision was ice water in the face of bioethicists, who concluded that the couple should not have been informed of the unusual, vague condition. The bottom line, says McGee, is that "when given the opportunity, people can do things that are inappropriate and unwise."

This inescapable element of human nature is why industrialized societies that respect the basic freedoms of their citizens nonetheless impose so many niggling restrictions on them—speed limits, gun control, waste disposal regulations, food-and-drug preparation guidelines, and so on. As technologies advance further, conferring even more power and choice on the individual—the abilities to travel at astonishing rates of speed, to access and even manipulate vital pieces of information, to blow up human structures with little expertise—societies will have no option but to guard against new types of abuse. *Real Ethik* is, therefore, inevitably a present



for aggressive and complex government oversight of society and its powerful new tools. Scratch the surface of both the information and biotech revolutions, in and what one discovers underneath is a "control revolution," suggests political theorist Andrew Shapiro, a massive transfer of power from bureaucracies to individuals and corporations. In an unregulated control revolution, free markets and consumer choice become even more dominant forces in society than they already are, and in virtually every arena social regulation gives way to economic incentive. Unrestrained consumerism represents the ubiquitousness of pop culture and the free-for-all competition for scarce resources. Ultimately, even such social intangibles as privacy become commodified.

The unpleasant extremes of this climate are not very difficult to imagine: an over-class buying itself genetic immunity from industrial waste, leaving the working class gasping in its wake; conglomerates encoding corporate signatures onto genetic products, rendering competing products ineffective and enforcing the ultimate brand loyalty; parents resorting to all available legal means to ensure their kids can compete effectively, including attempts in the parlance of the Repository for Germinal Choice, "get the best possible start in life." In the absence of legal restrictions, one envisions the development of a free-market eugenic meritocracy—or, to coin a term, biocapitalism. If left up to the marketplace, designer genes could even allow the wealthy to pass on not only vast fortunes but also superior bioengineered lineages, thereby exacerbating class divisions.

With that much freedom and independence, the paradoxical question one must finally ask is: Can freedom and independence, as we know them, survive? The genetic revolution may well deliver the apex of human liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," but it seems destined to conflict with another bedrock American principle. Two centuries after it was first proclaimed, the Declaration still abide by the conceit—the "self-evident truth"—that "all men are created equal." We know, of course (as did our founding fathers), that this is not literally true: people are born with more, less, and different varieties of strength, beauty, and intelligence. Although we frequently celebrate these differences culturally, from a political and legal standpoint we choose to overlook them. For the purposes of sustaining a peaceful, just, and functional society, we are all considered equal.

In an unregulated, unrestricted genetic revolution, by highlighting our physical differences and by allowing us to incorporate them in our structures of enterprise, might well spell the end of this egalitarian harmony. In the pre-genetics era, we are all still external competitors, vying for good jobs, attractive mates, comfortable homes. After the revolution has begun in earnest, much of the competition will likely take place under the skin. We will compete for better code. Such a eugenic culture, even one founded in a democracy, will inevitably lead to the intensified recognition and exaggeration of certain differences. In a newly human-driven evolution, the differences could become so great that humans will be literally transformed into more than one species. But even if this doesn't happen, our thin metaphysical membrane of human solidarity might easily rupture under the strain. "The mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs," Thomas Jefferson wrote two centuries ago, "nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them . . ." Who today can consider the momentum of genetic research and be confident that in another two centuries Jefferson's words will still hold true? ■

## AFTER THE GENETIC REVOLUTION BEGINS IN EARNEST, WE WILL COMPETE UNDER THE SKIN—FOR BETTER CODE





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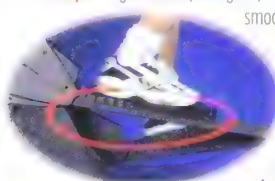
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# GIVING WOMEN THE BUSINESS

On winning, losing, and leaving  
the corporate game

**W**hen Brenda Barnes, one of the highest-ranking female executives in the United States, announced last September that she had resigned as president and CEO of Pepsi-Cola North America to spend more time with her children, the media promptly cast her as a representative casualty of the anxiety and ambivalence forced on women by the terms of corporate success. Although Barnes asked that her choice not serve as a basis for generalization, some observers could not do otherwise. "This has set the rest of us back a long time," a female marketing consultant told the *Wall Street Journal*, warning that Barnes "was *too* honest. . . . The workplace isn't the place for frankness."

Wishing to offer an opportunity for such forbidden frankness, *Harper's Magazine* invited five interested parties to discuss women and their ongoing troubles inside corporations.



*In "Women Improving the Workplace," she moderated the Summit Room on the sixtieth floor of the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company building in Boston. Barbara Jones served as moderator.*

*is a senior editor of Harper's Magazine.*

ANITA BLAIR

*is a former editor of the Washington Post, a Washington, D.C., market devoted to women's business issues, and a founding partner of Welty & Blair, a business-law practice in Arlington, Virginia. As a member of the Virginia Military Institute's Board of Visitors, she led the unsuccessful campaign to go private rather than admit women.*

ANITA BLAIR

*is a political essayist, columnist, and social critic, and the author, most recently, of Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War. Her report "Spinning the Poor into Gold: How Corporations Seek to Profit from Welfare Reform" appeared in the August issue of Harper's Magazine.*

ANITA BLAIR

*is a professor of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley. She is the author of The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home & Home Becomes Work and, with Anne Machung, of The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home, among other books.*

ANITA BLAIR

*is the senior vice president, Retail and Small Business Marketing, of Staples, Inc., a national office-supply chain with annual sales of approximately \$4 billion, where she has strategic, operational, and financial responsibility for retail marketing.*

ELIZABETH PERLE MCKENNA

*is a former associate publisher of Bantam Books and the former publisher of Prentice-Hall, Addison-Wesley, William Morrow, and Avon Books. She is the author of When Work Doesn't Work Anymore: Women, Work, and Identity.*

## THE SITUATION

BARBARA JONES: You are a vice president, on your way to becoming a senior vice president, at a Fortune 500 company where you've worked for twelve years. As it happens, your husband has recently lost his job as a college professor and is seeking adjunct work. But whether or not he finds a job, you are the family breadwinner. You also bring home the health insurance and retirement benefits. You've been working since you got out of college, and you love your job. You have a big appetite for corporate life. You want to climb as far up the ladder as you can. But there are forces in play at your company that are not about the work itself. You watch the men play golf and call it business, which you can understand, but after some female colleagues have been in your office discussing work, you overhear a senior male colleague disparage this meeting as a coffee klatch. A young female associate tells you that at her review her boss complained that she spent too much time in the bathroom; he added that women employees often spend too much time in the bathroom. Another woman learns that she's making significantly less than a new male employee with precisely her background and responsibilities;

when she asks for a raise, she's given a small increase that does not make her salary comparable to his; she's also given the big chill. You learn that another woman at your office has been criticized by a senior man for not dressing femininely enough. You hear a joke—or a rumor, you're not really sure which—that a female senior vice president has become a parent by surrogate pregnancy, because there's no time at this company for a real pregnancy and—as everyone knows—clients don't like to meet with pregnant women. When a male senior manager calls a 7:00 P.M. meeting and a male associate says he needs to be home with his children and asks how the senior manager can stay so late when he has children too, the manager jokes, "I've got a wife. Why don't you get a wife?" Your mentor, who is very competitive and very successful at what she does, gives birth to a third child and quits her job to be with her children; a man gets her position. Your mentor was insightful, if, perhaps, too feminist for you, about what she thought was happening at the office. She talked about the corporate culture as a male culture, created by and for white men, and not a good culture for human life or commerce. She talked about a clash between the values she wants to have as a parent versus the values of the office. She told you once, bitterly, that her boss said of her first



pregnancy, "That's wonderful, just don't tell anyone about it." This first-rate woman's departure discourages you, because you *do* want to be part of corporate life. You *do* want to stay in and climb the ladder.

This scenario is a compilation of some of the real situations I've heard about in the past few months. It seems, on an anecdotal level, that women are having a hard time in corporate America. The statistics are sketchy but seem to support the anecdotal evidence. For the first time in nearly twenty years, the wage gap between men and women is widening (full-time working women make just under 75 percent of men's median income, down from 77 percent four years ago). Although 46 percent of the U.S. workforce is female, nearly 98 percent of the senior-level management of Fortune 500 companies are males. Less than 2 percent of Fortune 500 top wage earners are women. Under .5 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs are women. In a 1995 Yankelovich poll, only 2 percent of professional and executive women said they were very satisfied with their jobs. What is really going on?

ARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD: Women haven't cracked into the corporate elite for a lot of reasons. They don't have powerful sponsors at work. And they don't have "wives" at home, so they are strapped for time. Junior male executives who are, in a way, defectors from the senior male culture have told me, in whispers, "What senior men say to us is, 'These family-friendly policies are nothing. I don't want to hear another word about work-family balance.'" In the top circles family-friendly policies are a fig leaf over a highly workaholic culture. The enormous time demands are a way of shunting women out, women being the ones who often feel more responsibility for kids.

ELIZABETH PERLE MCKENNA: Except that I have one child and three stepchildren instead of three children, the mentor who quit her job muttering about values could have been me, although I didn't leave to be at home with my son but to find work that was sane, which is a very important point. Yes, I define myself by my job. Is it all of me? No. But is it the cornerstone of my identity? Absolutely.

Let's face it, the rules for success, which are unwritten, are really a value system. The first thing I learned when I went to work was that it was more important to act right than be right. I had to look as if work was everything. Long hours are a requirement. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can appear to be more important than what you do. Now, these rules *may* have made sense in the 1950s, in an affluent culture during an aberrant hiccup of history when Americans

had enough money that someone could stay home and do all the work of child rearing and taking care of sick relatives for free and someone could go to the office and be sacrificed to the pillar of success. But these rules don't make sense now, and not just for women. They don't make sense for a whole generation of people who need two incomes to pay the bills.

JONES: Aren't time demands necessary for a corporation to produce?

HOCHSCHILD: Most people believe that. But that statement is overly simple, bordering on false. What matters most is not how long you work but how you work. Lotte Bailyn, an MIT sociol-



ogist who studied a team of long-hours engineers at Xerox, found that they could never meet their project deadlines. But when, at her suggestion, the company established midday "library hours" during which no one (not even nervous managers) was allowed to interrupt the engineers, they met their deadline for the first time. They didn't work longer to produce more.

JEANNE LEWIS: I disagree with the picture you're painting of the workplace. Well, I half disagree. Whenever I read articles or hear things about corporate America, a homogeneous notion doesn't spring to mind. I think of individual places I've worked. I worked in the banking industry before going to business school, and I've been fortunate enough to be with Staples since business school. Culturally, the banking industry sounds like what you're talking about,



but the retail industry, and in particular where I work, could not be more different. Even within a corporation, different departments are subcultures within a culture. I don't think a homogeneous corporate culture exists.

HOCHSCHILD: Well, take it subculture by subculture.

ANITA BLAIR: That doesn't work either. It's not even industry specific. Probably Staples and your competitor Office Depot are quite different.



LEWIS: I can speak from experience on that, because we almost merged with Office Depot. We had the opportunity to see what their culture is like, and they are very different from us.

BLAIR: Men and women both gravitate to companies where they can feel culturally at home. And if you don't feel at home in a particular industry, that doesn't mean you're never going to find a home in so-called corporate America. It means that you're not compatible with a particular company or a particular department.

LEWIS: I've got to believe, though, that Staples is not unique. I have friends participating in other corporate environments who are having experiences similar to mine: they're producing and being rewarded.

BARBARA EHRENREICH: But you're inside. You see individual companies. I'm outside. To me, from the outside, the phrase "corporate culture" means something. It's a very hierarchical culture and, compared with one of the few other kinds of organizations I've worked in, which is

academia, the corporate culture demands a lot of conformity. You are kept in line. In fact, even as you talk, Jeanne, I'm wondering, "How free is she to talk here, knowing that this is going to be published?" You could say, "Oh, that's insulting. I can say what I want." But I can say anything and I can't be fired. And Arlie can say pretty much anything, because the sociology department at UC Berkeley is not going to say, "We heard you said such and such at a *Harper's Magazine* forum" and toss her out.

JONES: We did speak with a number of women executives, many of whom gave me an earful about their personal experiences, but it was very difficult to find anyone who could speak on the record and feel safe about her job.

MCKENNA: Of the 200 women I spoke to for my book, nobody spoke on the record. Everyone said, "I'll give you the truth, but you've got to give me a new name." And I can understand their position. In corporate life, I was told to not rock the boat. Shut up. Toe the line. Support the agenda.

LEWIS: I actually have a problem even with—this is not a Staples-specific issue, but—I have a problem when people talk about child care and work-family balance and men are not part of that discussion. It should matter to them as well.

JONES: A man is not going to be fired because his wife is going to have a baby. His family's pregnancy is not going to enter into his job equation.

BLAIR: But it's illegal to fire somebody for pregnancy.

JONES: It's still happening.

BLAIR: As a lawyer, what I find often happens is that somebody is pregnant, and she's having a terrible time of it and missing a lot of work. That person may be fired for missing work. That's not the same as getting fired for being pregnant.

JONES: But if we want a next generation, and if women are working, working women are going to have to have babies, right?

BLAIR: You've still got a job that needs to be done. The deal between the employer and the employee was not: "I'm going to pay you regardless of how many hours you come to work." The deal is: "You work, you get paid."

MCKENNA: My private name for what's going on is "Ophelia goes to the office." We're all aware that young women now face very real, difficult decisions about how they're going to fit in to the culture—they've got to be quiet and popular, or speak out and maybe not be accepted—and I think a similar set of pressing decisions follows women into the office environment: What am I trading to stay at this job? What am I pushing down inside of me?

HOCHSCHILD: What is also happening is that the



workplace itself, the thing women are moving into, is shifting. We have to keep our eye on two balls: what women are doing, and what the workplace is doing. What the workplace is doing is dividing the workforce into two tiers. One tier is a kind of workaholic cult at the top; the other tier is made up of contingency workers, part-time workers, temporary workers, contract workers, who often don't have benefits. The top tier is getting smaller, and the bottom tier is getting bigger. From the point of view of capitalism and shareholders, the system can have more flexibility this way. There are always oscillations in demand for goods and services, and now you don't have to hold on to workers and pay their benefits while demand is low. You can forget about them. You can store them and just call on them when you want to. This makes bottom-line sense. But it exacerbates competition in the top tier, so fewer and fewer of the women who are hanging on at the top can also have a—

MCKENNA: A life.

HOCHSCHILD: —a personal life. Women should be equal to men, but in what kind of system? You could have a company that rewarded productivity but didn't push family life so far into the margin.

BLAIR: I attribute the problems you describe almost entirely to regulation. The reason there's this bottom tier is that government has imposed a lot of demands and requirements on business that business simply can't handle. When government says pay people X amount of money and give everybody health insurance, it severely restricts the ability of business to negotiate with workers. When businesses have to treat everybody the same, they have to shrink the number of their everybodies. Businesses didn't wake up one day and say, "We're going to have part-timers and independent contractors, and we're going to try to do our best to get rid of people." Instead, they woke up and said, "We're subject to all these taxes and labor rules, and if we're going to exist and make money, then we have to do different things with our personnel than we used to do."

JONES: Are you saying that if the government were not leaning on corporations, there would be more women at the top?

BLAIR: No, I disagree with the whole premise of your question. The problems you describe of getting to the top of a big corporation are not unique to women. It's a false dichotomy to say that somehow men have it easy and just swim to the top whereas women have all these problems. News flash: men have problems, too. It's very, very competitive to get to the top of any hierarchical organization such as business is, and business is that way because historically it's

worked. People may not easily achieve their ambitions as a result of a lot of these things we're talking about, but the obstacles are not exclusive to women. Incidentally, I reject the notion of a level playing field. Only God can make a level playing field. Fate intervenes, no matter what. There's no way that we can create a level playing field, and it doesn't seem to exist in nature either.

HOCHSCHILD: You're saying that it's impossible to have equal terms for people?

BLAIR: Sure, you can have equal terms for people, but that's not a level playing field. You still can break your leg. Things that are beyond anyone's control will affect the outcome.

JONES: Well, why should women even try to compete in these bad corporate environments?

BLAIR: Indeed why, when they have choices? Corporate America, and particularly the large corporations, is really only one of the choices a person has. There is government, which employs 15 percent of all workers in the United States; there are nonprofits, educational institutions, hospitals, and so forth. There is small business, and there's religion and the military—old classical occupations. So I have no sense that women are somehow being herded into corporate America and there made to suffer.

HOCHSCHILD: Quite the opposite. [Laughter]

## STAYING IN THE GAME

MCKENNA: A company I know, which is a small unit of a big company and predominantly women, found that—there must have been something in the water—seven of the forty-eight women were pregnant at the same time. It was a highly sophisticated company, technologically, and the manager went in to her boss, who was a man whose wife had stopped working to raise their children, and said, "Okay, here's the deal. It's going to be very empty around here. What I would like to do is create some alternative work arrangements to make sure that all the work is covered. The kind of work we do and the kind of work some of these people do can be done from home with computers. Let's plan this now—we have nine months to figure it out—so that we can keep these people who have a long history with the company." And the boss said, "Absolutely not. Our company has never allowed that." The manager then went to the business manager, who was a woman who had had a child of her own and had negotiated these hurdles herself. She said, "Come on, help me. This is crazy. These are great, talented people. And some of them would rather forgo the meager salaries they're getting not to have to pay the day care. You're going to force people out of the compa-



my." And this colleague said, "We can't rock the boat. We haven't had a good enough year." Of those seven women, you know how many are left in that unit? One. What did the company lose? Talented, experienced people. We all know how much time and productivity are lost by retraining people and getting them up to speed.

BLAIR: The end of the story is what happened to the company.



MCKENNA: The company's been downsized so much at this point that it is now a tiny unit, and its revenue is substantially reduced from what it was at the time.

BLAIR: I'm sure that lesson is appreciated by people looking at the company.

MCKENNA: Not by the women who had to leave.

JONES: How many women are being cut out this way because they've taken time off to care for their children?

BLAIR: There are women who choose not to have children and who go at it just as hard as any man. There are other women who have children and still, you know, get the nanny and do the whole full-time-worker-who's-also-a-mother thing. And there are many, many women who have a child and then say, "I want to be with this child." These are personal decisions.

HOCHSCHILD: You're focusing on choice, but let's examine what an American woman's options are. In Norway, with its thirty-seven-hour workweek and generous parental-leave policies, a woman's choice to be with her child would

allow her to continue more easily in the corporate world.

BLAIR: Is she going to get to be CEO, say, even after she hasn't spent the same amount of consecutive time and gathered the same experiences as people who put in more hours and acquired more expertise? Do they just draw lots out of a box for their CEOs in Norway?

HOCHSCHILD: No. But in Norway what counts as "full time" or "long hours" is very different. The playing field—I know you don't like that term, Anita—is more advantageous to those who also spend time caring for people. The point isn't choices; it's what a culture holds out as options.

LEWIS: Choice is less of a burden in Norway.

BLAIR: Look, I would be more concerned if American women didn't have choices, if somebody were saying to me here that people are stuck in terrible jobs because the economy is so stagnant that no new jobs are being created and there are no other opportunities. If people couldn't get capital to start businesses, that would concern me, but merely to hear the story of somebody who worked for a bunch of jerks, my answer is, "Find another job or make peace with what you have." Those are the only alternatives that make sense. What else should we do? Regulate jerks out of existence?

EHRENREICH: There's a thought. But seriously, there's something else going on. I read management books now and then to get a glimpse of corporate culture, and I remember a book in which a woman at business school was assigned the problem of figuring out whether people are irritated by how slowly ketchup comes out of bottles and if a faster-flowing ketchup should be developed or if we really like the struggle with ketchup. She finally determined that we really like our ketchup slow. My thought was, "For *this* we left the kitchen?" What else could this obviously very bright, creative person have been doing with her time? If I had been in her position I would have said, "I'm going home to be with my kids. I may have no master of business degree, but at least we'll squeeze the ketchup bottles together . . ."

BLAIR: The squeeze bottle *was* a great step forward.

MCKENNA: When I surveyed women, meaning was up there on the list of what was most important in their lives: time for themselves, time for their family, and meaning. They look at this glass ceiling and say, "I'm gettin' old here. And what do I want to do with the rest of my life?"

BLAIR: It's a luxury to be able to have that complaint. I'm thinking back to my father and men of his generation. My father, who worked at IBM, could look up the ladder and see that there weren't very many men like him up there. Yet he had a wife and four kids, so he plugged along and did his duty.



MCKENNA: I hate to see progress tossed off as luxury.

BLAIR: I'm pointing out that limited success is not unique to women. I'm sure there are a lot of men who can realistically say, "There's not a great future for me in this joint—I don't play golf with the big boys—but either I'm going to quit or I'm going to make a rational decision to stick with this and do what I have to do."

MCKENNA: It's no secret that men have less of a culturally acceptable alternative in this world.

EHRENREICH: But I'm not interested in seeing women spend their time on the ketchup problem. It's not an immoral thing to do, but we should be able to bring some personal sense of meaning into any situation, including a corporate situation. Women historically don't compartmentalize as well as men, to use a stereotype. So *good*. Let's act on that. Don't check your desire for meaningful work in the cloakroom when you go to the office.

JONES: Does women's inability to compartmentalize have something to do with why they're bailing out of the corporate world? Are women saying, "I have gotten close enough to the top to see the big piece of cheese, to see what it means to be CEO, say, and I do not want that?"

MCKENNA: Women are bailing because they're looking up and saying, "Hey, there's nobody who looks like me up there. Am I going to knock myself out for the next twenty years only to be passed over for a man?" My last job was with the Hearst Corporation, which, as we know, makes its money off the backs, literally, of women, off what women are wearing, and I looked upstairs and didn't see any women up there. Women are bailing not just because of the massive organizational skills you need to be a woman and a worker at the same time if you have a family but because they look up and realize, "You know what? I could knock myself out for the rest of my life and end up three offices closer to the corner. Let me out. I want to do something in my life that matters."

## BABES AT THE OFFICE

JONES: *Fortune* magazine has been trying to highlight women in business on its cover for the past year or so, and more than one of those articles has hinged on the "babe-ness" of women. A recent cover story, about Darla Moore, CEO of Rainwater, Inc., was titled "The Toughest Babe in Business."

EHRENREICH: She didn't really look like a babe to me. [Laughter]

JONES: And *Fortune* had a previous cover story about seven women who got to the top doing it their own way—which, in each case, had something to do with using sexual power, being very feminine. This is also related to one of the few

gender-discrimination-in-the-workplace cases that has been litigated and won, a case in which a woman at Price Waterhouse was not made a partner because, she was told, she didn't wear lipstick. When the case got to court, the judge said, "This is a gender-discrimination case. They have to make you a partner." And the woman became a partner and got more than \$370,000 in back pay.

BLAIR: There was more to it than just lipstick. There were complaints that she was non-feminine.

JONES: Exactly.

BLAIR: She had a loud voice or something like that—

JONES: It's possible that the wage gap starts to widen when women are in their late thirties and older because women are bailing. But is age also a factor? Is it possible that women have to be feminine young things for men at work, and is this a factor in women's job potential?

MCKENNA: What a wild question.

BLAIR: In my experience as a corporate lawyer, being a babe in the classic sense does get you in the door. But longevity is based purely on performance. At a certain point it might even be detrimental to be a babe, because you give the appearance of not performing, of spending more time on your hair than worrying about the company.

HOCHSCHILD: In the company I studied, sex appeal backfired. The norms are that you dress in a very conservative way and don't accent your sexuality. There are feelings against being overly sexual as well as against being under-sexual. You should sort of be moderately sexual. [Laughter] If there is discrimination, it might be against a careening sexuality, which would distract men from their work.

MCKENNA: Studies show that it's an advantage to be tall and handsome for men, too. But good pecs are a lot less intimidating than great tits.

EHRENREICH: I've heard men use the expression "D cups" to mean "dumb women." The implication is that, to fit in, you can't have exaggerated secondary sex characteristics. You can't be "too female."

MCKENNA: This is all about making women disappear and not be women. Men sometimes don't want to be reminded that they're dealing with women, because women come with a bunch of sloppy concerns that have to be addressed. We have ovaries and uteruses that eventually produce something that interrupts the work flow. Or, God forbid, we're ugly; America hates ugly. As women, our power base has traditionally been our beauty. That's how we found men to support us so that we could have the children. That's the traditional model, let's face it. It's all part of a very real gender indoctrination



that still exists in the minds even of people who don't want it to be there.

BLAIR: Can it be eradicated? We do, after all, come in two sexes and reproduce by virtue of attraction between men and women. I don't think that if you wanted to you could simply eliminate that aspect of humanhood.

## GETTING TO THE TOP

JONES: Jeanne, why are all the top officers at Staples men?

LEWIS: When you say top officers, you mean the group of seven? How do you define top? Yes, the CEO and the president are men, but there are an increasing number of women who are executive vice presidents and senior vice presidents. The women are part of the pool of talent from which promotions are made.

JONES: At Staples, there's one executive vice president, out of five, who is a woman; she's in human resources. Staples actually has pretty progressive numbers compared with other companies. I mean, here's enlightened Staples and still . . . What are the numbers on the senior vice presidents?

LEWIS: Five of seventeen are women.

JONES: People on the inside tend to talk about office politics on a case-by-case basis. They say, "It depends not on whether it's a woman or a man but on who the woman or the man is." But if you're really making decisions on a case-by-case basis and not basing them on discriminatory prejudices, why are men in more positions of power and making more money than women?

LEWIS: Women exit the workforce—to have a family or whatever—prior to reaching the upper levels. If you need to accumulate some experience in business as a prerequisite for running a Fortune 500 company, and I think we'd all agree that you do, then to the extent that women exit before they accumulate that experience, it should not be a surprise that the numbers are lopsided.

JONES: But if women started entering the U.S. workforce in large numbers in the 1970s, shouldn't they have enough years of experience by now?

BLAIR: In the early 1970s, the percentage of women getting MBAs was under 5 percent, so it's a minuscule number of women who are coming along at this point who are hitting their stride, ready with the MBA and the years of experience.

LEWIS: And this assumes that those who entered the workforce *stayed*, which the statistics say is not the case.

BLAIR: People outside corporate America underestimate the degree to which it is a real meritocracy.

JONES: Is it a meritocracy? The Glass Ceiling

Commission, which was started under the Bush Administration and oversaw a number of independent studies on women in business, found that the reason women are not at the top has less to do with seniority than with mentoring: it's a bias problem. All of the studies showed that business is not a meritocracy.

BLAIR: Then what is it?

JONES: It's a schmoozocracy: you advance because of who you get along with at the office. So if there's a difference in culture between men and women, gender enters this equation.

EHRENREICH: That corporate America is not a meritocracy, that there has been some sort of systematic bias against women in addition to whatever choices women make, is old, old news.

JONES: The majority of women managers are in departments where the people they manage are predominantly women. Those fields are health care, personnel, labor relations, public relations. If there's an executive vice president who's a woman, she's in human resources, and she will not become president of the company. Are women so different from men, biologically or sociologically, that they're self-selecting out of engineering, self-selecting out of operations—present company excepted, Jeanne—self-selecting out of the positions that would put them in line for the top?

BLAIR: Well, to be in engineering, for example, you need to have an engineering degree, and you start moving toward an engineering degree probably in junior high or high school. So that's a track that requires a decision way back in your career. A better question would be, Are companies irrationally overlooking human resources and P.R. and marketing and so forth when they seek a CEO?

HOCHSCHILD: That's a good question.

BLAIR: That depends on the nature of the company's business. For example, when you describe Staples, it seems to me that Staples is not going to go off into a division other than merchandising, saying, "Let's get our CEO from over here." Whatever kind of people populate the heart of the business, whether they are men or women, they're going to have a better chance at becoming the company's president. There is some self-selection that goes on in women's choices of work, because a lot of women appear to prefer—when they have children or plan to have children—to have jobs that allow them to exit and enter the workforce.

LEWIS: When I was at Harvard Business School, I was shocked to find women who were probably twenty-seven years old, women who had accumulated about five years of work experience, stating as one of their goals for going to Harvard Business School that they were planning



"When I was in high school, my physics teacher—whose name was Mr. Bader—called me down one day after physics class and said, 'You look bored; I want to tell you something interesting.' Then he told me something which I found absolutely fascinating, and have, since then, always found fascinating."

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from the workforce and felt it would be easier to exit and reenter if they had a Harvard MBA. Women were paying \$70,000 over two years so that they could not work for a while.

MCKENNA: That shows the extreme lengths to which people will go to try to strike a balance between their work and their home life.

## MAKING CHANGE

JONES: Would it be good for society in general if women stayed in the corporation and tried to bust through to the top?

MCKENNA: It's easier to make social change at the top, because people have to do what you say, but you can make social change from varying levels. As the companies I worked for merged with other companies, and I got farther and farther away from the top while sitting in the same place, it actually freed me to speak out a little more.

EHRENREICH: How much change that will affect other women has been made by women who've gotten near the top in corporations? In medicine, women coming in as doctors have made a bit of change: women doctors are supposedly more personable, more holistic, et cetera. But if a woman gets higher and higher in a corporation, is she going to be in a position to do things that will affect the women who are keeping the shelves stocked in the average Staples store? I haven't seen a lot of that. What I see is a woman getting dragged onto television whenever a corporation dumps some hazardous chemicals: she's the P.R. person. Denny's, for Christ's sake, put a black woman on TV to explain why Asian Americans got beaten up in their parking lot. That's tragic. Before I can get behind you getting to the top, I want to know what it's going to mean for the rest of us.

LEWIS: You've just made two assumptions. The first is that when women rise to top positions they will then be able to make the changes that you're talking about, if they even subscribe to those changes. And second, you're assuming that change can be made only at the CEO level. That's obviously not the case. One of the toughest problems in a very large company is that the bigger you get, the faster you grow, the higher up you go within an organization, the more stuff happens down below that you feel you have no control over. There are women who are making changes who may not be CEOs or senior vice presidents.

EHRENREICH: Let me put this to you personally, Jeanne. Is change for women part of your agenda? As you rise, do you want to make changes that will improve the life of the seven-dollar-an-hour woman in a Staples outlet?

LEWIS: Even though I'm in retail, I don't run or operate the stores.

EHRENREICH: All right, if not change for the store clerks then change for somebody else in the corporate hierarchy. Do you have a larger social goal for yourself as an executive?

BLAIR: That's a stereotype of women that I think has to be objected to. The women I know in so-called corporate America are an unbelievably diverse group.

EHRENREICH: I'm just asking this one.

BLAIR: Yes, but it assumes—

EHRENREICH: We'll get to YOU.

BLAIR: —that a woman has to have a social policy, and she *doesn't* have to.

EHRENREICH: Okay, she can tell me she doesn't give a damn, and that'll be my answer. She can say that she shouldn't be burdened with that concern.

LEWIS: Let me just make sure I understand the question.

EHRENREICH: What are you, Jeanne, going to do for women? Suppose my sister is working in a Staples outlet? I just want to know.

LEWIS: That's a bad example. Within the area I currently run, we have women and we have men, and what you're asking me is: Do I have an agenda to improve the work environment for just women? The answer is no. Do I have an agenda to improve the working environment for the men and women who work there and to attract the best talent? The answer is yes.

MCKENNA: Does that agenda include quality-of-life issues?

LEWIS: Absolutely. I'll give you a specific example. Our executive vice president, who is a woman, who does run human resources but within a retail environment—and human resources in a company that is built on store labor is a very important position; we have thirty to forty employees per store, and we have 600 stores and are opening two of them a week—she's looking into providing on-site day care. For me, I look at the talented group of people in my area—I don't even know how many people; fifty, sixty, seventy—and if people are excited about what they're doing, if they're able to concentrate when they're at work, and if they feel fulfilled, not project by project but over the long haul, if they feel that they're being developed and invested in, then that's good for the company.

MCKENNA: These are human values, not just women's values, is what you're saying.

LEWIS: Yes.

HOCHSCHILD: To me the issue is double. On the one hand, how can we create equal opportunity so that women are at the helm and get the rewards and, we hope, are able to change things, to humanize the culture, to make more Staples-type cultures, which are better for the



workers and their families. On the other hand, what about the downsized refugees? That second tier. This is speaking sociologically, not personally but from a God's-eye view.

JONES: Of sociologists. [Laughter]

HOCHSCHILD: Of *all* of us, as we sit here on the sixtieth floor. How can we redistribute *respect*? To me, that's the key. It's through windows like these, here on the sixtieth floor, that corporations see the world. From here you can't easily see the bottom, but it's important to see the bottom. I don't like the hard edge of the corporate culture women are trying to get equal in; it's a culture that doesn't have empathy for the people who are at the bottom. In addition to trying to get equal consideration in the corporation, women need to fight to change that culture. Why I am more worried about the capitalist system than you are, Anita, is that capitalism gets us hooked on respect for productivity and cuts out respect for care. We've got to be wired into a high-paying job in order to feel good about ourselves. Local civic organizations—the League of Women Voters, the Lions Clubs—are losing members because they don't command much respect anymore. We would do better to redistribute respect to the folks who are caring for others—men and women, on and off the job.

BLAIR: People are already protesting the high price of a high paycheck. They say, "I want more control over my life. And I will trade money for it." They're coming away from the notion that I am how much money I have.

EHRENREICH: I wouldn't want to go to the boss for a raise and have him say, "Hey, money shouldn't mean that much to you." I absolutely agree with you that money is not how we should measure ourselves or assign respect to others. But, boy, I would fight if I got that kind of line from the boss.

BLAIR: People *are* voting with their feet. They are leaving big corporations and starting their own businesses. Particularly women. It was a historical aberration in this century when women were just home keeping house. Before the industrial revolution, women and men worked together on the family farm or whatever the family's trade was. And it was only that little blip of history that somebody referred to earlier that put women at home. It was an unsuccessful experiment [laughter], and what I see now is a great trend toward self-empowerment. The exodus from big companies is very positive. Large corporations are a vestige of a past industrial age, and in my mind the sooner we can get rid of them the better—for women and families and everybody else—because people will be able to achieve what they want indi-

vidually much more readily. They will be able to define it and to go after it rather than having to fit themselves into an excessively large organization that is no longer operating at a human scale.

HOCHSCHILD: Why wouldn't companies be perfectly happy to have all their women leave and



then just fill the slots with men?

LEWIS: Because of talent. Not all talent sits with your male candidates. I face it every day when I'm hiring: it's tough to get good talent, regardless of gender.

MCKENNA: The accounting firm Deloitte & Touche found that 90 percent of their women were gone by partnership time—not a very nice statistic. Ninety percent of these women went to other jobs, where they could get more respect and where they might get more money or a better quality of life. Poor old Deloitte & Touche said, "Oh my goodness, we've spent millions of dollars training these women, and they're leaving with our connections!" So the company organized a big task force and spent a lot of time and money analyzing why these women were leaving and what could have made them stay, and the company *changed*.

BLAIR: Decisions about whether or not we're going to use teams or innovate in some way should relate to the mission of creating value for the shareholders; otherwise, the company's going to fail. America is a capitalist country ultimately. Short term, many times, there is dislocation as people seek new ways. You find that you



can't sell buggy whips anymore, so no matter how good a buggy-whip maker you are, no matter how nice you are to the mothers who make buggy whips, you just can't sell enough anymore. There's going to be dislocation. But the idea of competition, which is inherent in capitalism, impels us all toward something better. Under a competitive system, you have to be better than the next company. We try things; sometimes we make mistakes. If we don't try things, that's a mistake. But that is the only way I can see to have rational progress in the world. I don't think that you can define in advance what's going to work and expect it to work through the millennia.

MCKENNA: You can look at the needs and values of your present working constituency and make the work fit into their lives so the company can continue to grow and be profitable and the employees can have working environments where they aren't tearing themselves apart. Unfortunately, we've gotten very complacent, because we're afraid. We're afraid of losing our jobs, so we've shut up. We've stopped talking about values. It's only the numbers of upper-management women who are voting with their feet that is forcing the values discussion back on the agenda. Most people can't vote with their feet, because they have to pay the bills and have health insurance. We need to continue an unfinished revolution and broaden it so that it's a human revolution and not just a feminist revolution. I'm not saying, "Don't have capitalism, don't be profitable." I'm saying, "If your car is broken, don't go back and get a horse and buggy. Go get the car fixed." We're not talking about going back to a time when women didn't work; we're talking about fixing the work environment to reflect basic human realities.

EHRENREICH: Women have not yet lived up to their responsibility as outsiders in corporations. I think they've been beaten back, beaten down, and when they're beaten out, the explanation is always framed in reproductive, physical sorts of terms. But it is right and human to want to raise your children and live with your family, and the corporation should adjust. We're not making that case clearly enough. And in an era of downsizing, people tend, in general, to drop their criticisms of the world of employment, saying, "I'll take whatever I can get." Women in corporate America, so far, have been silenced, especially those women at the relative top. But they should allow themselves to ask the challenging, subversive questions—not just how do we work but what are we working for? What are we making? What are we producing?

MCKENNA: But I think you see a change as women

get older. The silence—the years of silence, which are an absolute requirement for advancement for 90 percent of the corporate culture—catch up to you. You've seen the toll it takes, and you start to get a little more courageous. Older women are more willing to say, "I have to stop trying to cram my foot into a slipper that doesn't fit me and waltz around saying, 'Isn't this great?' I have to say, 'Can I get some new shoes, please? I still want to dance the dance, but I want some new shoes.'"

JONES: Why should corporate America let you wear those new shoes?

MCKENNA: Because I have twenty years of great experience. Because I have a proven track record of producing bestsellers. And it's not just me. Every woman I know who faces this, you know, doesn't face it in her third year of work. She doesn't have enough experience accumulated. She faces it closer to her fifteenth year of work, when she's got a lot of experience, a lot of perspective, and probably some influence too.

JONES: Then why isn't the structure changing? Or is it?

MCKENNA: The structure is changing, but not a lot and not quickly. We got very spoiled by the women's revolution, which happened over thirty years. This corporate revolution is a much slower one, because numbers matter: there needs to be a critical mass first, a pipeline full of people with whom these issues resonate, before you can have meaningful social change. Also, this is a movement without leaders. We have to stop being such good girls. And we better start doing things within communities again, not as individuals. Because you cannot change the values of a community or a business or an office or a corporation or a society by yourself. All you can do is go home and feel that you've failed, alone, and blame yourself.

JONES: Public-opinion research has shown that although women are eager to work together on issues of shared concern, they are strongly resistant to describing themselves as feminist or to joining a "women's movement."

BLAIR: In the public mind, a *woman* is someone who acknowledges that men are part of the human race, and a *feminist* is somebody who puts women and women's interests ahead of men, and frequently ahead of children.

EHRENREICH: But the corporate world is a perfect case where that view of feminism could be refuted in practice. Women, as the relative outsiders, can say, "No one should have to live like this." We cannot have corporate America destroying American families, and that transcends gender. In fact, if we are militant enough about the need for livable family-friendly jobs, the guys will thank us. ■



# HASTA LA VISTA, FIDEL

In Cuba, death waits (patiently) for the dictator  
By Patrick Symmes



A few minutes after 5:00 one July morning, the mess and humidity over Miami International Airport meet a miserable, suffocating emerald. Inside Concourse B the sound of a distant vacuum cleaner does not penetrate the top of a dozen men, each strapped on top of or beside bulging suitcases and overfilled duffel bags. The Cuban does not return to his homeland easily, but neither does he return empty-handed. I have seen Cubans in the transit lounges of their diaspora—Miami, Nassau, Cancún—carry microwave ovens, stacks of baby clothes, stereo systems, computers, and once even a full set of tools onto the flight to Havana. Gifts of capitalism are doled out via excess-baggage fees. There have been troubling incidents here, as the travelers know: in January a woman disembarking from the Havana flight was slapped, punched, and thrown to the blue carpet by another woman who had been lying in ambush. Each is a Cuban exile, and each considers the other a traitor. Their struggle over the relative merits of dia-

logue versus ostracism as a means of reforming the Cuban regime—was transcribed in the next morning's *Miami Herald* as a hilarious catfight. A photo was included.

The flight is restricted to journalists, academic researchers with a special permit, and Cuban exiles visiting relatives in "extreme humanitarian need," the latter a loophole so wide that the flights are usually packed.

Check-in begins not one or two but six hours before the flight. You show your papers to enter Concourse B, and then each document is scrutinized again inside, while every suitcase and package is opened and every item in it fondled by a team of private security guards. The excuse for this search is that Cuba, a "terrorist state," according to the U.S. State Department, might be importing weapons or banned technology in my carry-on bags. More realistically, the extensive security and rigorous paperwork serve to deter people from visiting the island.

When we are cleared to board, just before noon, there is a final surprise waiting around the last bend in the Jetway. A gauntlet of a dozen U.S. Customs agents is waiting for us. The Cubans file slowly, deferentially, beneath their gaze, but a Customs detective immediately stops me (my Irish complexion? my lack of appliances?) and quizzes me in a very professional manner about the purpose of my trip. He studies not my words but my physical reaction to his.

I tell him that I'm off to see Fidel Castro. This is not an appropriate comment in the midst of a security check, and he tells me I must wait. The journalist goes

Patrick Symmes's last article for Harper's magazine, "Ten Thousand Revolutions," appeared in the June 1997 issue.





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duce the relevant documents and wait. He looks them over, then he boards.

Miami is 200 miles from Havana as the crow flies, but our plane is a civilian airliner filled with 170 Cubans, exiles and three journalists, interrogated not by logic but by political concerns. Direct flights between the United States and Cuba are banned under the Trading with the Enemy Act, and so we taxi, take off, land again forty minutes later in Nassau. The aircraft then rolls into a disused corner of the Bahamian airway, where we wait another forty minutes. No one gets on or off the plane. Then we are up again, and forty-five minutes later we are landing in Havana, the letter of a direct flight completed at the cost of only a little extra spirit and, as a result, the inconvenience of the human beings involved.

The immigration officer at Martí International Airport is in the Ministry of the Interior, a vast internal-security apparatus that asks the same questions as his league across the water. This is always the worst and best moment of the trip here, when that small, frigid fear lands on my shoulder with familiar weight. I don't tell him that I have become addicted to this tiny, unnecessary fear. I don't tell him that I love all the desperate qualities of his nation, from the hookers in the Parque Central to their German boyfriends to the idealism gone insane. The terror of the revolution and the overwhelming sadness of Cubans I know here and abroad are things you bring up with a man in the Ministry of the Interior while he is holding your passport.

Instead, I tell him another truth: I am here to attend the celebration of the Cuban revolution's birth on July 26 and to witness the World Festival of Youth and Sports. He watches my neck.

I talk, and I watch him watching my neck. I watch

**R**eports of Fidel Castro's death are greatly exaggerated, but they don't eliminate the Schadenfreude that accompanies each funeral.



to announce the death of the  
d One was Fulgencio Batista,  
Castro subsequently chased  
town on the morning of Janu-  
1959. The premortems contin-  
through the 1960s and '70s,  
to peak in the late '80s, when  
died (according to exile  
after quitting smoking (1986)  
cancer (1989), and have con-  
strong into the '90s, when  
has fallen to unspecified ail-  
twice (1991 and again in  
The most recent rumor, of a  
roke, came this summer when  
r Cuban official named Cas-  
o relation—died. On this oc-  
exile radio host Norman Díaz  
s listeners to “put the bottle of  
agne in the refrigerator,” but  
*Sun-Sentinel* of Ft. Lauderdale  
gently a few days later, Castro  
OT DEAD, AGAIN.”

same can be said of Cuba it-  
fter the fall of the Berlin Wall,  
Florida braced for a collapse  
ever came: exiles put cham-  
on ice, and everyone from the  
Guard to the Dade County  
dusted off or designed the  
ency-action plans they would  
close ports and keep order in  
eets of Little Havana. But the  
went by, and the champagne  
fizz. Each “crisis” proved ex-  
ted; each coup and assassina-  
imagined.

*Miami Herald* has a Spanish-  
ge edition whose primary pur-  
have concluded, is to supply  
s losers with a meager suste-  
of hope. *El Nuevo Herald* spe-  
s in declarations that the situ-  
in Cuba is “tense,” as if this  
new development. In January  
per reported with a straight  
hat “1997 WILL BE YEAR OF RE-  
EN IN CUBA,” according to the  
y named Cuban Anti-Com-  
Army, and went on to out-  
plan for 1,000 guerrillas to rise  
Escambray mountains. In  
apering, such a story is known  
evergreen.”

as become almost customary  
journalists to search for hairline  
in the Cuban revolution with  
confidence of a county-fair  
biologist holding a skull in his  
Andres Oppenheimer, a *Mia-*

*mi Herald* reporter, wrote a book  
called *Castro's Final Hour* that has  
been out now for four years. Around  
the same time that Oppenheimer  
was redefining how many minutes  
are in an hour, I was on a Boulder,  
Colorado, radio show predicting that  
Castro had “two years, at most.”

For forty years, outsiders like my-  
self have underestimated the ability  
of Castro's revolution to adapt. It  
has adapted to the collapse of the  
Soviet Union and the implosion of  
its own economy, to domestic riots  
and diplomatic ruin. It has righted  
itself with tourism dollars, careful ra-  
tioning, and limited economic re-  
forms. It has legalized farmers' mar-  
kets, allowed private restaurants to  
open, fixed price controls, and co-  
opted its own black market. But  
largely it has survived because Cas-  
tro has refused to die; because, de-  
spite the predictions of journalists  
and the solemn hopes of countless  
Cubans, the autumn of the patriarch  
has proved to be an Indi-  
an summer.

**I**t is a blistering, sweaty day in Ha-  
vana, but fortune always attends the  
public appearances of the maximum  
leader. A canopy of cooling clouds  
rolls in just as Fidel Castro appears at  
the entrance to the University of  
Havana, high atop a broad stairway  
that tumbles toward a meeting of  
two great avenues, a proper vantage  
from which to view the decayed sky-  
line of Havana and the indifferent  
ocean beyond.

Twelve thousand delegates to the  
World Festival of Youth greet Cas-  
tro's appearance with elated cheers.  
The festival is an old Socialist-bloc  
institution, a forum for Marxist in-  
doctrination that used to be held in  
countries like Czechoslovakia, East  
Germany, and the Soviet Union back  
when those countries existed. Viewed  
as they parade into the plaza below  
the stairs waving Che Guevara ban-  
ners and their national flags, the  
young delegates are an astonishing  
cross section of global socialism's re-  
mains. The largest delegation is from,  
of all places, the United States, an  
849-strong cadre of idealists and left-  
coast “sandalistas” obsessed with the  
dangers of the free market; they are

# Merry #!@\*ing Christmas!

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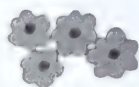


# the man did bust our music



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★Publishers Weekly started review



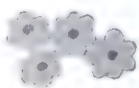
## the conquest of cool

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Counterculture, and the  
Rise of Hip Consumerism

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followed by several hundred North Koreans in matching gray leisure suits, each with a picture of his (or her) leader pinned to his (or her) breast. In between the shiny-taxed youth of Iraq and Syria march the Lebanese socialists, a Brazilian samba band, and some frothy Puerto Rican nationalists. There are also enough thirty-something French, German, and Italian "youths" to fill every nightclub in town.

The only thing lacking is Cubans. Oh, there are a few hundred at the very front of the crowd, specially delivered from the ranks of the cadre to provide voluminous cheering. They greet Fidel's appearance with flights of ecstasy, standing on tiptoe, howling with joy, chanting his first name (letter by letter, like cheerleaders), and pumping their fists rhythmically in the air. Their enthusiasm is placed conveniently close to the camera gallery, as though the hint of physical threat did not peep from behind their widely smiling teeth.

But ordinary Cubans, no. Behind the 12,000 delegates—the Americans, to their eternal credit, promptly poop out and wander around looking for drinking water—a row of policemen and a fence keep perhaps a thousand idle *habaneros* at bay. No doubt some are devoted to the revolution; no doubt many others are here for the spectacle, boredom being what Cubans have instead of passports. They are too far back really to hear what's being said, which is lucky for them: I can hear everything—every speech denouncing imperialism and every folk song praising Che—and I envy the deaf.

This stairway is old terrain for Castro, who made his political debut here as a fiery law student in the early 1950s and was chased up and down the entrance by Batista thugs on numerous occasions. Today, the eve of his seventy-first birthday, the figure in green (uniform) and gray (beard) is anything but spry. Descending step by step, Castro acknowledges the crowd only once, with a vague, imperial wave of his right hand that makes him resemble nothing so much as a blind old man feeling for a baby to put on the head.

The leader is surrounded, ways, by about thirty acolytes, litically determined rings. A few itary men with holstered pistols around the edge, and behind are the real killers, three civilian men in guayabera drape loosely over the bump small of their back. Closer to are a dozen members of Cuba's less political class. I ask a press official who those deferential men and women are; he claims to know.

It is only as Castro descends, second flight, midway down the side, that I notice the inner core of the entourage: a single man in a yellow guayabera. He is generally shoulder to shoulder with Castro, this boy, an odd presence on his unlined face and intense gaze aimed somewhere at Castro's arm. The young man walks by Castro's side, almost stapled to him, only when the party comes to the landing does he step back.

There are speeches, but none by Castro. The man who made a reputation out of talk, whose most important weapon in the hills of Sierra Maestra was a radio transmitter, who filled entire afternoons with rhetoric, keeps his own counsel. Yesterday in Las Tur, a provincial town where Castro celebrated the July 26 anniversary of his first attack of his guerrilla war, he stood by and said nothing.

I move down off the press form, cross through the crowd past the camera crews by waving press tags, and get as close as a foreigner is allowed to be that I watch Fidel for an hour. I observe his body language the way the from the Ministry of the Interior served mine. I slowly realize that he doesn't have any.

He stands very still, never cracks a smile, making no gestures, resting only once, in a few private comments offered by the young woman at his side, a leader of the Union of Young Communists, who applauds briefly at the end of his speech by slapping his right hand to his left, which seems frozen in position. It is impossible to tell if it is a physical flaw or merely the at-



soul that inevitably afflicts  
who stand on Kremlin walls.  
remaining on his feet through-  
hour-long event, Castro turns  
without so much as a glance  
crowd, the boy in the yellow  
shirt moving with him in  
slow lockstep.

ck in 1992 I watched a queue  
ans in Old Havana jostle vio-  
for heads of cabbage tossed  
high truck down into the  
a city street. This episode  
to mind as I leave the rally  
ss a man selling sandwiches  
cart in the street. I wander  
confirm my suspicions: yes,  
dwiches contain actual meat.  
ce is three pesos, which even  
n can afford.

walk from the rally across the  
o neighborhood toward my  
ach block unfolds further evi-  
of Cuba's relative recovery  
ne economic implosion of the  
990s. From a pushcart a ven-  
s deep-fried pastries known as  
; thimbles of sweet coffee are  
from a storefront window; the

blackboard at a corner bodega, where  
rations are distributed, lists cooking  
oil in stock; an old *guajiro* farmer of-  
fers me pineapples, again in pesos,  
again at a price a Cuban can afford.

This is not prosperity, for Cuba re-  
mains achingly poor. The people of  
Havana still live hand-to-mouth,  
still hang threadbare laundry from  
the railings of their crumbling bal-  
conies, and still complain bitterly  
about the lack of food, shoes, gaso-  
line, tires, electricity, and rum. It is  
still possible to walk a mile across  
the city and not see a single business  
of any type.

A few years ago, there were no cats  
in Havana. They had all been eaten;  
I knew Cuban families who even  
boasted of it. And the dogs had all  
turned pink after losing their coats  
from starvation. Cuba's leading eco-  
nomic indicator may be that the dogs  
of Havana have regrown their hair.

Or perhaps it is the pizza shop I see  
midway along the street. Ecce Cuban  
capitalism: if you have a telephone,  
which many Cubans don't, and it  
happens to be working that day,  
which is impossible to predict, you

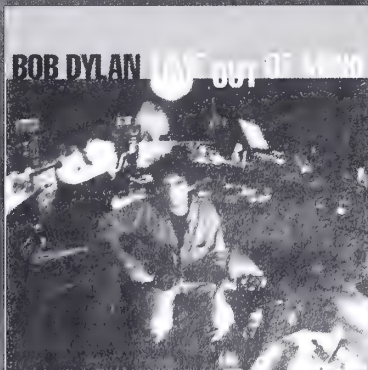
can use it to order a pizza, which  
tastes terrible, to be delivered to your  
home on a moped, which probably  
lacks gasoline, for a price given in  
U.S. dollars, which few Cubans have.

Within the diminished expecta-  
tions of post-Communist Commu-  
nism, however, some consider street  
capitalism a revolution in itself. Its  
arrival in Cuba has been amply docu-  
mented by many journalists, and  
the implication is always the same: if  
the thin end of the capitalist wedge  
is visible now, then the thick end  
can't be far behind. Indeed, although  
the regime's opening to profit has  
been limited, there is something un-  
deniably auspicious about discover-  
ing a Benetton boutique on the edge  
of Havana Harbor.

Unless, of course, the boutique is  
deserted. In May, Castro denounced  
the profiteers who had shattered the  
"crystal vase" of the revolution with  
their greed. In one of the phrases that  
terrify Cubans, he called black mar-  
keteers—eighteen-year-old boys sell-  
ing cigars to support their families,  
private cab drivers, and such—the  
new "contaminating elements" of the

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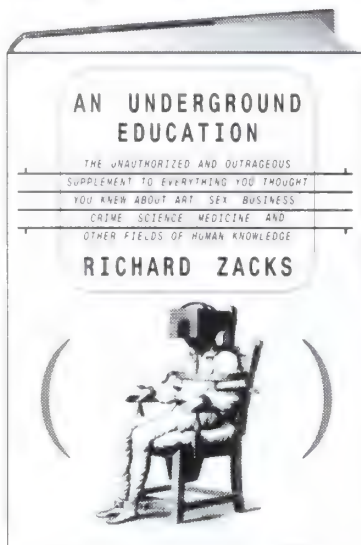
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revolution. Just before we turned arrived this week, police drove protesters off of the street corners, placed dozens of dissidents, and harassed new private restaurants for transgressions of the health and tax regulations that are changed every week.

As usual, the locals sense the regime better than Bush executives, solidarity activists, visiting journalists. Making my way to the Hotel Inglaterra, I found the press tags dangling around my neck are identical to the tags worn by the 12,000 delegates who arrived "for anti-imperialist solidarity and friendship," as the T-shirt said. This will be my undoing.

Just three blocks shy of the group of men playing dominos, the sidewalk look up and I am striding along with my flapping credentials from the Youth Festival. "Here for the festival?" the young one calls out, and I nod as I pass twenty feet down the sidewalk. One of the older ones says quietly, "Shiteater."

On a day I choose not to remember, in a neighborhood I cannot describe, I meet with a man I name to discuss things that cannot be mentioned. We sit on a bench overlooking a busy street and talk with small talk about autoradiographs, so I will call him Mechanic.

I point out that with every year, more and more Che Guevara posters are materializing at every intersection and every kiosk in Havana. Che beams from wall murals, caressed in almost every public place and is the subject of a new exhibit at the Museum of the Revolution where military officers are lectured on his life of moral purity. On what Fidel said about contamination and the crystal vase, isn't the revolution turning away from capitalism, lashing itself to the rails of its intransigent history?

The Mechanic laughs. He seems as naive as everyone else as he scans the streets of Cuba for the end of the capitalist wedge. Studying the direction of the revolution, looking at the black market, he responds, is like trying to understand

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real money is always down-  
The ordinary people must be  
not to cut themselves on the  
of the crystal vase, but the  
—Afro-Cuban slang for big  
—will profit whether the vase is  
or not. The vast corpora-  
known as *organismos*, that now  
the Cuban economy are owned  
ordinary Cubans but by the  
e itself. Gaviota, a large  
a conglomerate, is controlled  
he other than MINFAR, the  
erio de las Fuerzas Armadas  
cionario. Thus the very gen-  
charged with defending the  
ion are now providing tours  
all those pictures of Che are  
rds.

Mechanic and I sit in silence  
balcony for a moment, but we  
notice that it is *too* silent. Down  
there is no traffic in either  
A police car passes. The Me-  
leans forward and points at  
eet. Nothing happens for a  
ut, and then a black Mercedes  
shiny and perfect, races past.

"Now another one," he says, and, in-  
deed, an identical black Mercedes  
shoots into view. "And another," he  
says, and the third passes. "Now a po-  
lice car, then another, then a few un-  
marked cars with antennas," he says,  
and this, too, comes to pass. "And al-  
ways at the end a bus." An empty bus  
passes. The silence returns. No traffic  
in either direction. There is no need  
to say who was in the center Mer-  
cedes. The superstitious consider it  
bad luck to say His name; the rest  
consider it unnecessary.

Traffic is not always held this way  
for the motorcade. I once saw Castro  
pass the Hotel Inglaterra in a single  
older limousine, and Cubans along  
the street burst into spontaneous ap-  
plause while young men on bicycles  
pedaled in hot pursuit, cheering and  
shouting "¡VIVA!" Whatever their  
distaste for the state of Cuba, indi-  
vidual Cubans often still view Fidel  
Castro as "Fidel Castro," Cuba's only  
celebrity. Cubans are wise to their  
own regime, but sometimes they can  
miss the forest for the tree.

"He still goes to work every day,"  
the Mechanic says. "He can still func-

tion." The comment is curious and I  
wait for the Mechanic to decide  
whether he will explain it. He does.

Castro, he says, has Alzheimer's.  
The disease is in the very earliest  
stages. It was diagnosed earlier this  
year, and Castro is receiving state-  
of-the-art care from Cuba's strong  
medical-research industry. I don't  
know what to say to, or make of,  
this claim. It would explain much—  
why, for instance, the leader has vir-  
tually stopped speaking in public  
(loss of short-term memory and ver-  
bal skills are among the first symp-  
toms) and why the young man in  
yellow stood so close (he is there to  
catch Castro should he stumble, the  
Mechanic explains, though so far  
this has not happened).

Castro once declared that "history  
will absolve me"; if he does have  
Alzheimer's, history may dissolve him  
instead. As he fades from the picture  
of Cuban life, present in name but  
absent in mind, Castro could, ironi-  
cally, be made to preside over exactly  
the political reforms he has rejected  
until now. And those reforms could  
keep the revolution alive by morph-

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ing it into something new—a true hybrid of socialism and capitalism able to fend off any hard-line military coup d'état or exile-driven coup de main. Such an outcome is possible.

But only if Castro is indeed ailing, and as tempting as it is to believe the Mechanic, I know that his is but one of many possible truths. Castro might be healthy, or just old. He may actually have suffered the stroke that the exile rumor mills perpetually claim. Proof one way or the other is not an option, as no top official in Havana would be stupid enough to confirm the Mechanic's claim conversationally, let alone put it down on paper. The Mechanic and I have a slow, delicate conversation about his source, and eventually I ask if he could introduce me to the person who told him this.

"Absolutely not," he says, coldly.

Clearly, I should not have asked. After all, it is not my life at stake in discussing these matters. I decide to leave him in peace.

"Nothing is what it seems," he says to me on the way out. We both laugh.

At sometime around four in the morning I'm smoking a joint behind a bar that isn't officially open with a couple of sisters who aren't really sisters. They want sandwiches and beer, so I buy a round of each. At this hour, Cuba operates on an exchange economy.

Victor and Joel show up. They're a couple of *jineteros*, lean street hustlers who sell me counterfeit cigars. I can't stand these two, but they have a magical ability to find me anywhere in Havana at any time they choose. Victor is wearing the red T-shirt I gave him on my last visit, and now Joel wants one, too. I have been trying to avoid them.

"How were those cigars I got you?" Victor asks. "The best, right?"

"Terrific," I lie. They drink my beer, eat my sandwich, and eye my girls. Victor boasts yet again about all their connections, their friends in various ministries, cigar factories, and hotels. Nothing, according to Victor, moves in this city without him knowing about it. "So how is Castro's health?" I ask him, trying to appear

uninterested in my own question.

"Fine," he says. "He had some back problems last year, but he's fine now."

I leave the beer and food and take the sisters. I wave a dollar in the street and a Lada pulls over. We negotiate a fare and zoom off toward the girls' house, but suddenly the car pulls over and they jump out. We're outside another restaurant. I protest loudly, and the cabbie looks at me like I'm an idiot.

"Girls... must... eat," he says.

I follow, sit down, and watch Havana's demimonde while away the hour until dawn. Everyone in the place is under twenty-five, utterly bored, and sleepy, but then being bored and sleepy counts as a good time in Cuba.

There are no napkins, and my lust expires while I watch my girlfriends cover themselves in chicken fat. When the first blue streaks appear over the skyline, I pay for the food, pay for the taxi, and begin walking the long route back to my hotel. The girls pursue in the taxi, but I hide behind a statue and they do not see me.

The city is cold and deserted, an abstraction without people. There is neither sweat nor struggle, noise nor deal making. For once, Cuba is free of regret, free of tragedy, free of history, free of the enormous weight of being Cuba. It is the most peaceful moment I have known here.

I wake up from my reverie when a lone policeman standing predawn sentry on a corner orders me to halt. He offers to arrange a cheap black-market breakfast for me.

All anyone wants to do in this country is eat.

The flight out of Havana is light on appliances; everyone leaves Cuba empty-handed. On the incoming flight, several people ripped off their seat belts and rushed to the windows to catch a first glimpse of their natal soil. A woman in a middle aisle rose to her toes, peered over me, and shouted, "*Mi tierra, mi tierra!*" before collapsing in a most dramatic fashion. The prosperous businessman on my right confessed that he had not visited Cuba since leaving it twenty-nine years ago, and when we disembarked

he leaned over to kick the oily asphalt of the runway as a toupee slipped loose.

Now the comedy rewinds into tragedy. As we fly in the opposite direction, the old man on my left is a true *guajiro*, a count down with a charming, crooked smile and a battered straw hat. He is taping both armrests passionately, asking him if he has flown much. "Never," he says. He just got his visa: en route from homeland to exile, from one life to another, he does not mind the twenty-minute wait to spend completing our fictional flight. As we sit on the tarmac in Nassau, and as we take off again he stares with a fixed gaze at the approaching horizon. After what seems like an eternity, a dark, flat line appears at the edge of his world. He watches this line as it slowly grows into the green coastline of Florida.

"Look," he says to someone behind him, as if it were the most magical thing in the world to see the land almost in the land of freedom.

Over the next two months, the *guajiro* settles in with his relatives and comes to know Miami's approximation of freedom, as I smoke my way through a box of Partagas and the delegates from Pyongyang grow nostalgic for tropical adventure, the rumor of Castro's poor health will intensify. The phrenologists—*el Nuevo Mundo*, the AM radio hosts, the delirious players in the street, and me—will palm the skull once more, attempt to read its cracks: a crack in the old man's step, his silence.

And then, in October, at the Communist Party Congress in Havana, Castro will walk onto the podium and deliver, without notes, a speech that lasts three hours and forty-three minutes of concentration and endurance astonishing in anyone, let alone of his age. When, with a certain lift to his step, he at last returns to his seat, he will have made one point that really matters: Fidel Castro isn't ready to be silenced. His audience will be drained, the phrenologists will be baffled, the champagne will have gone down the bucket, again.



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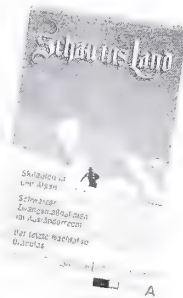
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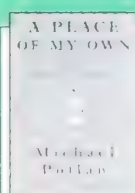
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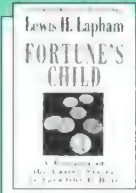
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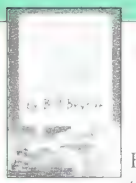
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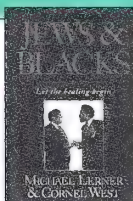
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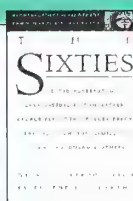
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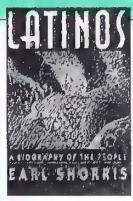
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# SACREBLEU! THE J

Gift merchandisers tal

Advertisers have long used character and story to contrive free-standing fantasies that entice and seduce. Merchandisers, on the other hand, have traditionally piggybacked on existing narratives and larger cultural phenomena to give their products authority and vigor. Hence Michael Jordan lends his name, and by association his athletic prowess, to Nike shoes; and *Men in Black*, the Movie, begets *Men in Black*, the Shower Curtain. Licensed goods offer the lonely consumer a safe way to belong—box-office receipts, publicity tours, and *People* magazine have given their blessing, and rather than risk purchasing the wrong coasters, why not buy the set associated with Brad Pitt and his warm, yeasty soul? In 1980, licensed goods racked up \$9.9 billion in retail sales in the U.S. and Canada. By 1996, that figure had ballooned to \$72.3 billion. Hoping to capitalize on this boom, last month Chronicle Books (whose brochure is pictured here), Sasaki, ACME Studios, Umbra, and Sirmos collectively launched a line of 200 gift products based on the history of a 1940s Parisian jazz club called Aeroblu. The twist is that neither the club nor its “owner,” Max Morgan, ever existed.

Despite these posters' apparent *vérité*, Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis never blew the roof off Aeroblu, the club; their estates have licensed their names to lend Aeroblu, the product line, credibility and cachet. The idea for Aeroblu originated in the restless brain of Brooks Branch, who worked on licensing for *Star Trek* and *Forrest Gump*. Dissatisfied with movie tie-in “tchotchkes,” Branch wanted to “reverse the process” of the traditional licensing scheme, wherein products commemorate a pre-existing tale, and instead let the products literally speak for themselves. With Aeroblu, every cuff link has a tale to tell. “Even if you’re talking about the plates or the ties, on the backs are little quotes from the characters,” says Branch. “The idea is never to unveil the whole thing completely, but if you looked at all the merchandise, you could piece the story together.”



To create the product line's image, Aeroblu uses the physical trappings of the 1940s and '50s, romanticizing those heady days of shifting politics, exuberant music, and undiagnosed alcoholism. With designs inspired by saxophones, Cuban cigar boxes, and vintage-airplane instrument dials, the licensees strive for an intelligent, free-spirited style, but in truth, there is nothing jazzy or improvisational about Aeroblu. Everything—from its focus-group name to its bogus authenticity to the comprehensive design scheme that Branch brought to the licensees—was carefully orchestrated to create a brand that could cash in on the martini-bar trend. Through Aeroblu consumers get to delight in the props of yesterday without having to invest in the solitary and unglamorous pursuit of learning about history itself.

Dennis Cass is a writer living in Minneapolis. This is his first piece for Harper's Magazine.



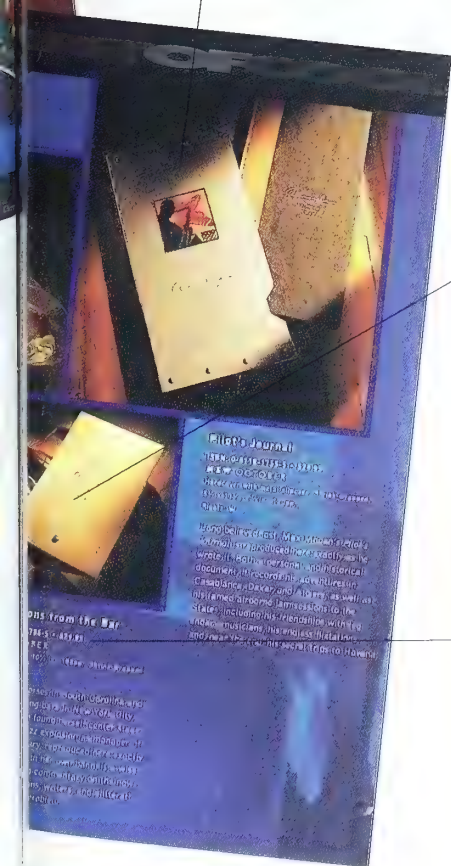
# ERA IS UP FOR SALE

story, by Dennis Cass

Like the J. Peterman catalogue, Aerobleu sells a fantasy lifestyle through narrative, but Aerobleu further blurs the line by presenting itself as history. Max Morgan's *Pilot's Journal* is among the most audacious items. Packaged in a distressed-aluminum slipcase inspired by the fuselage of his DC-3, Morgan's journal is reproduced "exactly as he wrote it," which seems to be at a fifth-grade reading level. Morgan, who claims to have brought bebop to Paris, hints at a political murder, but the era's politics have been discreetly sanitized. Aerobleu was formerly a *Luftwaffe* officers' club, but the psychic residue of Nazism has been excised, so as not to spoil your fun. Charlie Parker appears, but the implications of his artistic anarchy are left out, and when historical "bad boys" Orson Welles, Robert Capa, and Jean-Paul Sartre drop by, they loan their dissident aura to the club but dedicate their mouths to drinking, lest they bring up beliefs that challenge the notions of branding, cross-promotion, and licensing. Since the anecdotes and themes in Morgan's journal not so subtly tie in to other Aerobleu products, the narrative is more of a strategy than a story. Real stories raise questions, many of which linger unanswered. Marketing answers questions with a finality that doesn't dissolve until the next purchase.

Except for tiny disclaimers in the back pages of Chronicle's books, the line's packaging doesn't make any effort to dispel the impression that Aerobleu existed. Jazz historian Gene Lees was hired to seamlessly fuse fact and fiction: Lena Horne's post-nuptial sighting at Aerobleu, for example, coincides with the time of her actual wedding in Paris. In a particularly appalling move, an upcoming series of CDs from Verve Records will recast jazz luminaries as Aerobleu artists. When asked whether the public would feel betrayed by the use of historical authenticity as a sales tool, none of the licensees seem concerned. "It's one of the charms of the story," says Umbra's Steven Bager. "People don't know where the fiction ends and the reality begins." ACME's Adrian Olabuenaga is more succinct: "So what? I was disappointed when I found out there was no Santa Claus."

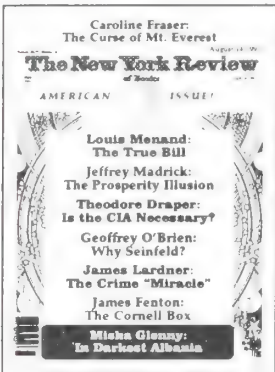
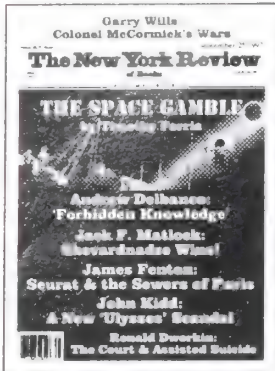
Just in time for Christmas, Aerobleu's high style and higher prices have landed prominent display space with greedy retailers such as Barnes & Noble and Bloomingdale's. If the line takes off, Branch, who calls Aerobleu his "White Album," dreams of a movie and martini bars as future additions to his empire. Succeed or fail, Aerobleu proves that marketers are no longer content to wrap their products in the soft terry robe of nostalgia—now the very fabric of history is for sale. If consumers accept a simulacrum—and there is no reason to think they won't—little stands in the way of merchandisers' duplicity, and while they may satisfy a temporary craving of the longing for a bygone era, once the fad is over, it's the past that will be damaged goods.





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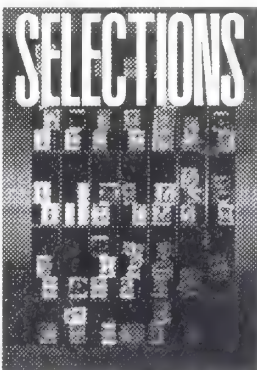
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# LADY MACBETH, PRICKLY PEAR QUEEN

By Jane Avrigh



I.

*It is foul and foul is fair  
It is the flavor of the prickly pear.*

—Scottish proverb

“May I wash my hands?” asked Lady Macbeth, and since it be a good hour before the capons were I pointed her in the direction of the green room. Earlier that day I furtively lined the walls with cheap acrylic towels, hoping to avert any mishaps. The next Sunday, after our mimosa brunch, Lady Macbeth had washed her hands for hours straight. Apparently the marked visage of the cheese baboon bore some sort of resemblance to her father.

Despite her eccentric manners, however, Lady Macbeth remained steadfast after by many of Scotland’s families. She attended teas and

weddings, and had a special fondness for christenings, when she might watch the bishop submerge a goggle-eyed infant, a tiny stream of bubbles coursing from its nostrils just beneath the still surface of the water. She was a woman, I believed, who decorated any event. At the age of forty-one, Lady Macbeth stood five foot nine, broad of shoulder and languid of gait. She danced a good tarantella, her long, flat feet brushing the floor. Her slightly crossed eyes were the color of

moss; the pupils, perpetually dilated, a deep indigo. She quaffed her ale with gusto and told stories about the thane-of-this and the thane-of-that, about battles with the Jutes and the Franks, about banquets when the halls ran red with blood and glutinous with mead. As she spoke, her voice grew increasingly husky until we all bent close so as not to miss a single one of her half-whispered words. Her eyes would move from one rapt face to the next, thin, bluish lips twisting into that half-smile for which she was so famous.

When she gathered up her skirts and rose, elevated lords swept bows to her, their plumes grazing the floor and tickling her toes. When she mounted her horse, a dozen stable boys ran to her assistance, each hoping she would let him give her a foot up. To my knowledge, none of them ever succeeded. Elgin, an apoplectic Apaloosa with an aversion to peasants, bucked wildly if any of them tried to

*Avrigh is at work on a collection of stories. She teaches English at St. School in New York City.*



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## Those "West Bank" Settlements Are they really the "greatest obstacle to peace?"

In the context of the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians that have now been going on for almost four years, it is often asserted that the Israeli towns and villages (usually and with some derogation referred to as "settlements") in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") are possibly the most serious obstacle to peace. That has been and is being repeated so often that many have come to accept it as truth.

### What are the facts?

**A recap of history.** Some thumb-nail history may be in order. Large numbers of Jews have been living in these territories since biblical times. Most of the Arabs living there are in fact relative newcomers. "Palestine" is the entire area now covered by Israel including Judea/Samaria (the so-called "West Bank") and what is now the Kingdom of Jordan. It originally also included the Golan Heights, which later, in an agreement between England and France, were ceded to France, and to Syria as the successor in possession.

In 1922, contrary to the Mandate of the League of Nations, the British severed the entire area east of the Jordan and gave it to the Hashemite Arabs for their assistance in World War I. Thus, fully 75% of Palestine, all of which under the Mandate and under the terms of the Balfour Declaration was meant to be a home for the Jewish people, was lost for that purpose. Only the area west of the Jordan River was left for the Jewish homeland.

**How the West Bank became "Arab country."** In 1947, after decades of strife between Arabs and Jews, the British decided to relinquish the Mandate. The UN stepped in and proposed a partition plan under which the country (west of the River) was to be divided into respective Arab and Jewish areas. Jerusalem was to be internationalized. The Jews accepted the plan; the Arabs refused it out of hand. In 1948, on the twice truncated territory

allotted to them by the U.N., the Jews declared their independence and the state of Israel was born. On the same day, six Arab armies invaded the new-born state. In what can be described as an almost biblical miracle, the Jews defeated them. When an armistice was finally secured, however, TransJordan remained in possession of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem; Egypt remained in possession of the Gaza Strip. TransJordan renamed itself Jordan.

**The Six-Day War.** Once in possession of the "West Bank" and eastern Jerusalem, the Jordanians promptly proceeded to expel all

Jews and systematically to desecrate and to destroy most Jewish sacred places, cemeteries and houses of worship. No Jews, re-

gardless of citizenship were allowed into the "West Bank," eastern Jerusalem, the locale of the Western Wall, the holiest site in Judaism. In 1967, Egyptian president Abdel Nasser, joined by the same array of Arab armies that had unsuccessfully tried to destroy Israel at its birth in 1948, launched another war against Israel "to drive the Jews into the sea" and into oblivion, once and for all. But the Israelis utterly defeated the combined Arab might in the Six-Day War, one of the greatest military victories in history. When the dust of war settled, the Israelis had not only retained their national territory, but had repossessed the territories of Judea/Sumaria (the "West Bank"), the eastern part of Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and had totally occupied Egypt's vast Sinai Peninsula.

It is clear from this short history that Israel's claim to the "West Bank" is far stronger than that of the Arabs. It's only by constant repetition that the world has come to think of these territories as "occupied Arab land." About 200,000 Jews now live in these territories. And why shouldn't they? Why should the Arab countries and the "West Bank" be the only places in the whole world where Jews cannot live? How can 200,000 Jews living among one million Arabs be "an obstacle to peace?" Over one million Arabs live in Israel. They are citizens, they have every civil right, and of course have nothing to fear from their Jewish fellow citizens. Certainly, nobody considers them an obstacle to peace.

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kicked in the head and lived out of their lives as smiling idiots just to carry oats.

I had been looking forward to dinner for some time. I had come of age—the previous year to be exact—and although the day celebration had been a mess (my sister cooked a flan, not Bertram supplied the Talisker), two kitchen maids, Nina and I did a charming vaudeville number in my honor, donning sombreros with ripe fruit and pulling each offstage with a cane), the event without symbolic value. I had been the family pip-squeak—a pigeon-toed, with a shrill laugh, tea kettle hitting a boil. But from day on I would brush my hair wet, wear a coat with tails; I fasten my boots with gleaming buckles. Through the window the prickly pear plants under rain, their fleshy green boughs their bristles pearlescent with dew. They were mine now; at the twenty-one, I had inherited my fabulous fruit fortune. In a poem was Prickly Pear King.

My new title meant more lawyers with fancy fountain pen, yellowing wigs, more than pear chutney in swollen jars, bells bearing my name in slop over letters. I was in need of a Pear Queen. The Walnut King, Walnut Queen, a small, wrinkled woman with oily hair, delicious scent; the Beet King, Beet Queen, ruddy and bold, bassoon of a voice. But the Pear Queen had to be a different creature. The prickly pear, simple fruit, and no safe one. It was bracing, contradicting metaphysical fruit both crabbed sweet. To the touch it was smooth the skin of a lizard; on the top mulch both pebbly and waxy shape was mysterious; its fragrance intoxicating. And yet it was than shape and fragrance; its state of being. It was Lady Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth was in good that night. I served oysters, she took between thumb and finger and slurped up with bacchic relish, revealing a pearl between teeth. Girlishly, she offered to



nd, not taking no for an-  
taught the empty shells in a  
attering heap in her skirt. She  
linger with the finger bowl.  
posed that evening, dropping  
knee so that she could rest  
row, iron-colored boot on the  
my neck.

ave poor sleeping habits. I lis-  
the night birds," she told me.  
a," I replied, examining the  
ovals of her kneecaps. She  
un in her stocking.

te my nails. Spit the parings."  
h," I countered, thrusting back  
uldres, losing my balance, and  
toppling into the fire.

everything I touch withers and  
he muttered. Her brows gath-  
ke unkempt clouds, and she  
to rake her fingers through her

derdash," I snorted, pulling her  
ree. I had heard such warnings  
riends and family, from peers  
iblicans, but their fatalistic  
made me snicker. In Lady Mac-  
saw what I wanted—a woman  
and daunting, a cohort and an  
spread my arms to embrace the  
at large, the hills and valleys  
d with berries, vines, legume  
s; with Lady Macbeth by my  
would gather in a rich and  
harvest of red and yellow cac-  
rs. Gently, I turned her around  
the vast estate over which she  
be mistress. Despite her  
s, I felt a tremor of pleasure run  
n her rib cage.

teen," she said. "I've been  
before."

few back my head and looked  
I in the face. She was chewing  
p, sending a slim thread of  
down her chin.

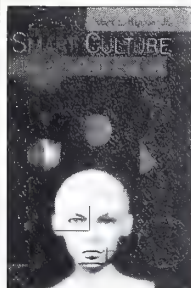
is time it will be different," I  
firmly.

ok her two hands in mine.  
were dry, hot, and chalky, but  
ressed assent.

## II.

re we go round the prickly pear  
Prickly pear prickly pear . . .  
T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men"

he first years of our marriage  
were happy ones. Lady Mac-  
beth was a picturesque Pear



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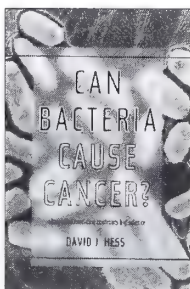
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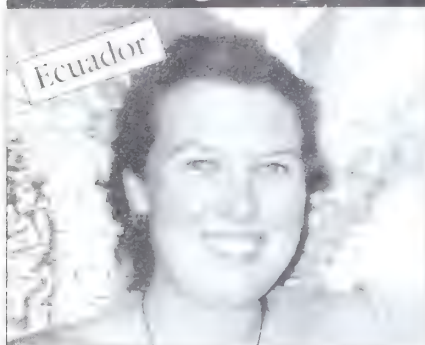
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Queen. Unflummoxed on a that bore her, she stood in proud, crown on her head in hand, hair and train flowing hind her like syrup. As I expected, she was also a fine Her Tokay parties were far bubbling with jazz and with Bohemian crystal. On Day she would lead a procession marriageable girls on mill-palfreys, everyone got Givenchy's spring line, and them before the county's noble thanes. A remarkably fit with pulsing quadriceps, walking tours of the high pointing out all her favorite ravens, and daws to the ladies, who snatched up the lars in their slender gloved if they were being passed toddy. She was a lively and bed partner, turning down sheets with abandon and her back so that each cracked, one by one, in p timed, tingling succession were the simple domestic sk on her. She was a good cook; watching her whip egg the rungs of bracelets clack gleaming on her arms was sight to see.

But in the third year of orriage, there was a blight. Oyster pellets of hail rained down on prickly pear plants, bruising flat, flabby arms and weakening foothold in the sand. In the of the night we would be away by the banshee shrieks of the and would rise to the wild where we stood, Lady Macbeth her taupe negligee, I in my shirt and matching peaked Mouth partly open, gaunt cheeks and cold as panes of glass, I watched the cacti with the solicitude of a mother.

For their success had become obsession. She brought them hand, molding the bulbous into the soil, strapping the sticks to improve their stature would squirt them with green fuffy gusts from her insecticide her face and shoulders draped sheik's. As they developed stubbly green armor, their we

## SOLUTION TO THE NOVEMBER PUZZLE

T	S	E	S	I	W	N	U	S	T	A	E
I	S	D	E	T	A	E	R	T	S	I	M
N	E	M	H	S	L	E	W	S	E	S	A
S	R	E	S	A	E	T	P	I	R	T	S
S	T	H	I	O	R	A	S	D	E	N	F
R	A	S	L	U	P	S	R	O	B	A	L
E	L	I	P	E	R	S	E	P	O	L	E
P	O	M	M	A	E	D	D	O	S	U	S
S	D	R	O	B	S	A	G	R	O	M	S
O	I	I	C	N	O	I	S	I	V	I	D
R	E	K	C	A	L	L	E	H	S	T	A
P	I	A	S	A	S	C	I	H	C	Y	S

## NOTES FOR "PURE PUZZLE"

Answer: The puzzle is a 12x12 grid.

ACROSS: 1. (12) A. (12) B. (12) C. (12) D. (12) E. (12) F. (12) G. (12) H. (12) I. (12) J. (12) K. (12) L. (12) M. (12) N. (12) O. (12) P. (12) Q. (12) R. (12) S. (12) T. (12) U. (12) V. (12) W. (12) X. (12) Y. (12) Z. (12) 1. (12) 2. (12) 3. (12) 4. (12) 5. (12) 6. (12) 7. (12) 8. (12) 9. (12) 10. (12) 11. (12) 12. (12) 13. (12) 14. (12) 15. (12) 16. (12) 17. (12) 18. (12) 19. (12) 20. (12) 21. (12) 22. (12) 23. (12) 24. (12) 25. (12) 26. (12) 27. (12) 28. (12) 29. (12) 30. (12) 31. (12) 32. (12) 33. (12) 34. (12) 35. (12) 36. (12) 37. (12) 38. (12) 39. (12) 40. (12) 41. (12) 42. (12) 43. (12) 44. (12) 45. (12) 46. (12) 47. (12) 48. (12) 49. (12) 50. (12) 51. (12) 52. (12) 53. (12) 54. (12) 55. (12) 56. (12) 57. (12) 58. (12) 59. (12) 60. (12) 61. (12) 62. (12) 63. (12) 64. (12) 65. (12) 66. (12) 67. (12) 68. (12) 69. (12) 70. (12) 71. (12) 72. (12) 73. (12) 74. (12) 75. (12) 76. (12) 77. (12) 78. (12) 79. (12) 80. (12) 81. (12) 82. (12) 83. (12) 84. (12) 85. (12) 86. (12) 87. 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he called them her "little And what a day for rejoicing been when they bore fruit! Now I can see her rapt face as she elted down to finger a pair of ears, bulging shy and tender as from a leathery pad.

Now, as she gazed out upon the hard, she knew in her heart they would not survive. A jolt of pain seared the vault of the head, dealing the entire orchard— upon rows of small spongy eggs, executing a grotesque, dancing dance. "Everything I touch withers and dies," she murmured to the tune of "London." "Withers and dies, withers and dies." She gyrated gently back and forth.

Her wife's eating habits now began to change. She turned up her nose at dishes that used to make her eyes and applaud with delight— eggs, tripe, osso buco. Now she ordered only white rice, cooked in oil, which she spoon-fed her in by grain, and black olives. When she had chewed away the flesh of each olive, she rolled her fingers around the thick, bare pit for a while—she could suck it and speak at the same time, much like a ragtime pianist with his ever-present wife proceeded to line up the windowsill to dry, after which she stabbed them with a fork and strung them into choker-anklets. These she called her "a line"; they were popular with the housemaids. When she had finished eating altogether, they would do nothing but stand about idly in their unfinished olive dresses—Elvira with a single ear-ribbon, Bonnie Doon with a half-choker.

She became distraught, bit her lip, and the quick. She forgot to attend to the busting parties, mead-hall visits, armory visits. My wife, who had always been so particular about her footgear, traipsed about in slippers—lace-ups—ostrich skin, worn and pale as boils. All day she smoked, absentmindedly stirring ashes into the saucepan as she looked sweetbreads, into the oven she drew her bath, killing all the potted plants and filling my spit-

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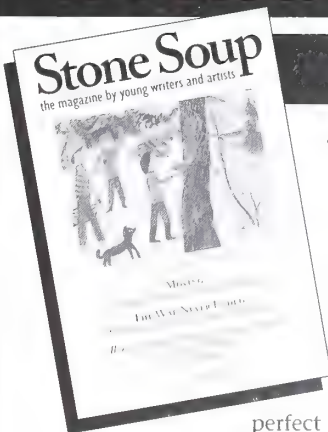
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toon. Her teeth, once long, clean, and pointed, turned a malty yellow and developed hairline cracks. I reminded her that when my dear mother died of emphysema, her lungs had swelled up to six times their natural size, but Lady Macbeth turned away.

"I must have something to do with my hands," she snarled, eyeing my throat.

I backed away, my bedroom slippers shuffling meekly. Outside spread a vast forest of shrunken shrubs.

### III.

*Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until  
Great Birnam wood to  
high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him.*

—Macbeth, IV. i

**I**t was a relief when my wife's three aunts decided to visit. They were maiden sisters named Sass, Fran, and Letty—comfortable, elderly women who were always needing a fourth at bridge. They lived in a homely stone cottage in Luna Glenn, a small province in the heart of goat country, and Lady Macbeth brightened at memories of the garden in which she had played as a child, how they used to dress her up in tattered boys' clothes and serve her pink tea with ginger root. The soil was full of rills and rocks, not to mention turtles, which were often mistaken for rocks. Aunt Sass, who tended the turtles she found ailing, brought along Jerry, her current pet, in an Italian shoe box. Aunt Fran brought her cat, Erminegarde, so named because the animal sat on Fran's white stole and growled at anyone who tried to make off with it. Fran wore the stole the evening we went to see *Lucia di Lammermoor*—our first night out in weeks. The three sisters passed my wife's binoculars back and forth, chirping appreciatively during Lucia's mad scene. They seemed to share almost everything. They shared a single monocle as they read the paper every morning at breakfast. They finished one another's sentences; when I inquired if the bad weather would be abating, they shook their heads sorrowfully and

replied "hail" almost in unison. Their knitting flowed together in a great tangle of pink, baby blue, and goldenrod. Only Letty stood out a little—the youngest of the three and the smartest dresser, she sported a yellow pillbox hat at all times and had a penchant for facials. I wondered if she still kept a hope chest.

"Cup of tea?" asked Aunt Sass one wet afternoon, pot poised to pour. I had chosen this moment finally to ask their advice about their afflicted niece, who was safely out of earshot in the other bedroom. Lady Macbeth would spend hours up there pacing and wringing her hands to the beat of the metronome, knuckles clacking together like castanets.

I generally declined highland tea, but I felt a sudden craving for the sisters' blend, a fruity, purplish brew, not quite crab apple and not quite elderberry. Proffering my cup, I watched the hot liquid make an arc amidst coils of violet steam. I shifted from foot to foot as I asked them, somewhat sheepishly, if I might be losing my touch as a husband and a husbandman, as a fruiterer and a king.

Sass, who was stirring the mixture with a darning needle, was the first to speak.

"Whether his fate be joy or despair . . .," she said.

" . . . the answer lies with the prickly pear," Fran finished.

All three nodded. Slowly, Letty raised her shrunken arm. Her spoon glinted in the flicker of the hurricane lamp as she let drop a dollop of honey, which fell like an amber tear. It skirted about, chased its own tail, then took the form of a pear, gleaming crimson and ominous in the firelight.

### IV.

*methought I heard a voice cry,  
Sleep no more!*

—Macbeth, II. i

**T**he strangest occurrences took place at night. Lady Macbeth thrashed and kicked, crowing in her sleep or half-rising with her veil of hair wrapping her face and broad, bare shoulders. She clawed and gurgled for light. I was aware

that in her heyday my wife had been a notorious sleepwalker, and she would rise to find the bed unoccupied, pearl morning light cold across her empty, dented sheets. The sheets were often strewn with burrs and crushed leaves. Once a dead mouse turned up, its clawed feet in the air.

As my wife vehemently rejected all forms of medical attention, she proceeded slyly and, if I might say so, with ingenuity. I went to dinner a Dr. Maurice Ravater known for his music therapy credentials from the Ecole Normale Supérieure. My wife was an aficionado of the Impressionist movement, and, as I expected, the two of us had much to talk about, she leaning down the table as her hair fell into her soup, he twiddling his thumbs and chewing his small mustache. She invited him to her garden the next day—perhaps he could compose something for the azaleas, such moody, brooding buds?—and he played for her the first bars of his *Boléro*. He played them again and again, modulating the brassiness, then the tempo. It was never quite right; I left him started shouting, "*Sacrebleu!*" in frustration. I returned home the evening to find both of them sitting together, Dr. Ravel still leaning on the piano, Lady Macbeth sawing an old viola, both of them shrieking, "*Sacrebleu!*" and shaking out their hair. They had amassed a great pile in the middle of the floor, my wife's reedy strands mingled with Ravel's neat brown tufts.

"There is nothing I can do for her," he announced to me one month, packing up his rectangular black doctor's bag. Large bald patches had appeared on his head, and his mustache quivered uncontrollably. My wife had absurdly high blood pressure, he told me; all that salt, sugar, and soy should be removed from her diet. "Mais," he said, dropping his voice dramatically, "the true problem is *chologique*. A condition about which very little, as yet, is known. Clytemnestra Complex, the French call it."

"Is there a cure?" I queried.



avel shook his head. "Par-  
ere is none. The symptoms,  
an grow quite hideous, are  
sband's eyes, not my own.  
your wife." He paused, then  
with the arch of a single, sig-  
eyebrow: "Look to yourself,  
ne, as well." And with that,  
bled a prescription on the  
a page of sheet music.\*  
a placebo," he snapped, and  
e, never to cross my thresh-  
n.  
ad prescribed, as it turned  
died yams.

## V.

*impress the forest; bid the tree  
fix his earth-bound root?*

—Macbeth, IV. i

e infancy, I had had the ca-  
ity to dream the instant I  
supine, but now I began to  
itch, smacking my thick ei-  
n pillow into different  
—a pumpkin, a turtle, a  
g. At first I thought this was  
ndigestion; I had been forced  
me tripe and leftover rarebit  
e the cook, like much of the  
staff, gave notice. With as-  
act as she could muster,  
ly had mentioned an in-  
rats and silverfish, as well as  
ich hooted at all hours. One  
ot take an innocent evening  
lded Angus, the philander-  
man, without pairs of eyes  
down on you from the  
s of every tree. Delilah, a  
young parlormaid, com-  
of the drafts that blasted  
the corridors, lifting curd  
area rugs like old women  
umage sales. The family  
hich had stood stalwart for  
ons, was quaking to its foun-  
The roof leaked an oddly  
fluid that dripped down my  
d neck each morning as I  
on my shriveled and solitary  
egg.

night I was awakened by a  
nd. It was not the chorus of

rs that the composition on the re-  
of the prescription was the begin-  
"the Dance of the Prickly Pear," an  
on of the now well-known orches-  
"The Hollow Woman."

the owls, the chafing of the katydids,  
the yelping of the wolverines, or the  
cry of any of the other forms of  
wildlife that had of late become so  
vociferous. Instead, I heard a soft  
chattering, still distant. I glanced at  
my wife to see if she had noticed it,  
but she was lying stiff and chill be-  
side me. An icy breeze parted the  
bed curtains, and I followed it down  
the stairs.

Sass, Fran, and Letty were assem-  
bled in the parlor. They had put  
aside their bridge game and their  
half-nibbled Social Tea biscuits, and  
sat crouched with joined hands, tit-  
ttering excitedly, their quilted house-  
coats drawn around their hoary bod-  
ies. With a sudden crash, the  
veranda doors flew open. A great  
wind lifted up the sisters' milkweed  
hair and chased the cards about like  
a flock of bats. The room swelled  
with the rustling of leaves. Beneath  
it all drummed another sound, a  
deep, low pounding, ever steady.

"What can this mean?" I gasped,  
but was silenced by Sass and Fran,  
who pressed fingers to their with-  
ered, coral-smeared lips. The floor  
began to tremble. Earth, mud, and  
rain gusted in our faces. A howl rose  
up, the groan of twisting opuntia.

"Though nature seems to seal her  
womb . . .," said Sass.

"For sprigs and seeds a frigid tomb  
. . .," Fran went on.

"The blighted blossoms somehow  
bloom!" Letty exclaimed, and ges-  
tured, with a magnificent flourish, in  
the direction of the orchard.

I turned. The prickly pears were  
on the march. Scores of them spilled  
across the terrain, down the dips  
and over the rills, their fruit glowing  
blood purple in the gathering dusk.  
At last I understood their force, in-  
exorable as fate itself. As they  
gained ground, I could see them  
flexing their pudgy arms, hear them  
humming softly in gummy, nasal  
voices—or was that the caroling of  
the wind?

A joyous shriek rang out behind  
us. Lady Macbeth stood lean and  
haughty at the top of the stairs, her  
face pale as a melting taper. Arms  
outstretched to the advancing  
shrubs, she beckoned, she command-  
ed, she welcomed them home.

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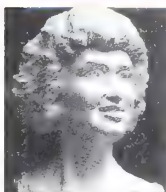
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## LETTERS

...Her programs for the states, she mentions our company, Maximus, Inc., and asserts that we "allegedly" committed fraud in the state of West Virginia. She goes on to say that when we were recently paired against the welfare department in Orange County, California, we were out-performed. She's wrong on both counts.

In West Virginia we made state prosecutors aware of a state employee who was misrepresenting himself to private contractors and the state. In over twenty years in business, Maximus and its employees have never been convicted of any kind of wrongdoing. In Orange County, Maximus employees have out-performed county employees. The *Los Angeles Times* misreported the facts, and Ehrenreich blindly reprinted its mistake.

David Mastran  
CEO, Maximus, Inc.  
McLean, Va.

Barbara Ehrenreich responds:

Let's begin with the competition between Maximus and Orange County. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that Orange County found jobs for 3,697 welfare recipients, whereas Maximus found jobs for only 2,473—and Larry Leaman, director of Orange County Social Services, confirms these figures. What Mastran might have pointed out in his company's defense is that Maximus was drawing on a smaller number of recipients and hence placed a larger proportion of them in jobs. However, he would still have to contend with Orange County's assertion that it has been more successful in finding long-term employment for welfare recipients, thus keeping them off welfare permanently.

As for Maximus's murky dealings in West Virginia, nowhere did I mention "fraud." The charge was that Maximus allegedly paid a state employee, Kenneth Roberts, to provide the company with information designed to give it a competitive advantage in bidding for a child welfare contract. Roberts was charged with fraud and convicted. Mastran

asserts that it was Maximus that turned Roberts in. But before we start congratulating Maximus for good citizenship in this matter, Mastran might want to explain how the company happened to enter an arrangement with Roberts in the first place—an arrangement, according to Roberts's indictment, in which he was paid \$5,000 a month and promised a job "in the \$10,000 salary range" if he delivered child welfare services contracts to Maximus. The West Virginia case underscores a point I made in my article: that, in their dealings with over-laden private corporations, underpaid public-sector employees are not always be reliable representatives of the public interest.

Correction:

In the November Index, Pat Mastran was misidentified as a former member of the House of Representatives.

## December Index Sources

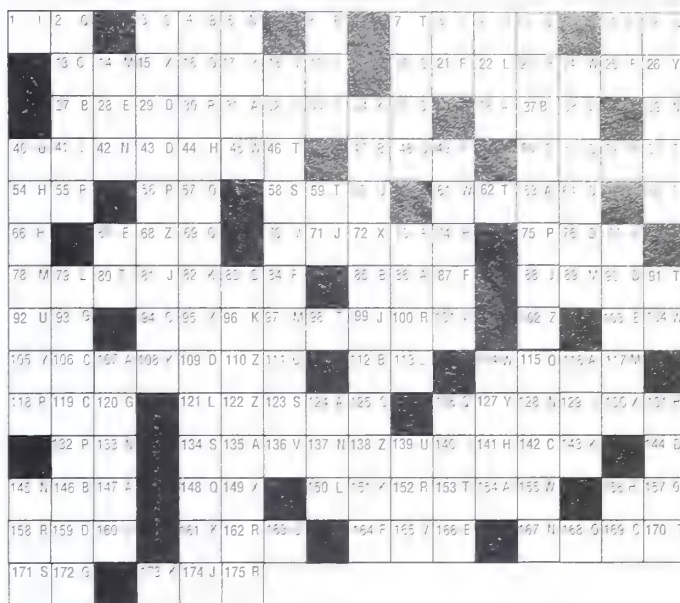
1 Roll Call (Washington); 2 Capital (Washington); 3 Michigan State (Lansing); 4 Federal Reserve Commission (Washington); 5 Cause (Washington); 6 Brennan (New York City); 7 Senator Mitch McConnell (Washington); 8 Flat Earth Society (San Francisco, Calif.); 9 U.S. Department of Defense; 10 U.S. Air Force; 11 Embassy of Haiti; 12, 13 The Peruvian Commission (Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia); 14 PRD (Mexico City); 15 World Vision (Washington); 16 Ald's Corporation (Oak Brook, Ill.); 17 D. Seymour, Columbia University; 18 U.S. Department of Justice; 19 Department of Corrections (Tallahassee); 20 Amnesty International (New York City); 21 Consumer Product Safety Commission; 22 Bureau of Labor Statistics (Washington); 23 Franklin Mills Mall (Philadelphia); 24 Public Schools; 25 Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA; 26 U.S. Youth Committee for the World (New York City); 27 Youth of Cuba, B. F. Buck & Company; 28 Center for Defense Information (Washington); 29 Embassy of Turkey/Harper's; 30 Holinger, Inc. (Toronto); 31 Comics (Los Angeles); 32 U.S. Department of Transportation/Centers for Disease Control (Atlanta); 33 Net/Tech International (Red Bank, N.J.); 34 Annals of Medicine (Philadelphia); 35, 36 Journal of Clinical Nutrition (Bethesda); 37 National Museum of American History (Washington); 38 American Dairy Farm (Rosemont, Ill.); 39 Eli Lilly (Indianapolis).



# DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 179

By Thomas H. Middleton

The diagram, when filled in, will contain a quotation from a published work. The numbered squares in the diagram correspond to the numbered blanks under the WORDS. The WORDS form an acrostic: the first letter of each spells the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken. The letter in the upper right-hand corner of each square indicates the WORD containing the letter to be entered in that square. Contest rules and the solution to last month's puzzle appear on page 76.



JES	WORDS
Exploit, feat	86 124 36 116 107 135
	31 63 154 101 147
Ruling prince in India	52 146 85 37 27 4
	112 6 47
Appeared; exposed; outdone (2 wds.)	106 119 65 3 142 169 13
Sale on all goods in liquidating a business	90 51 29 43 109 159 76 144
Put the pedal to the metal (hyph.)	67 28 73 103 25 166
"O splendid and sterile Dolores,/Our of Pain" (Swinburne, "Dolores")	21 164 87 84
Island, central New Hebrides, cap. Vila	120 12 16 172 93
Echinoderm, class Asteroidea	54 44 23 131 66 141 150 74
"Whenever they got his up, Clancy lowered the boom"	129 1 41 140
"What a mind is here o'erthrown" (Hamlet)	81 174 99 71
Put forth, emitted (2 wds.)	143 96 108 82 151 161 173
Greatest; ultimate	33 19 121 113 79 150 22
Arranged in order	39 14 97 78 89 117
Tawdry, vulgar	137 128 167 133 42 145

O. "The End ——" (1924 song by Harry Lauder; 3 wds.)	125 105 20 143 57 113
P. Weaver in A Midsummer Night's Dream	102 110 50 11 44
Q. Runkle	64 148 126 48 35 2 10 69
R. Popular alternative to past in cucina Italiana	175 100 30 158 152 55 162
S. Menace	58 171 123 134 50 77
T. Honor conferred upon Harry Lauder, Winston Churchill, Richard Ardenborough, etc.	53 46
U. Composer of "Dixie" (1815-1904)	
V. Indicated silent approval	
W. Oldest Greek in the Trojan War	
X. (1816-94)	
Y. Dealer in cattle	



# PUZZLE

## Key of C

By Stephen Schwartz and David Stern  
Edited by Richard E. Maltby Jr.

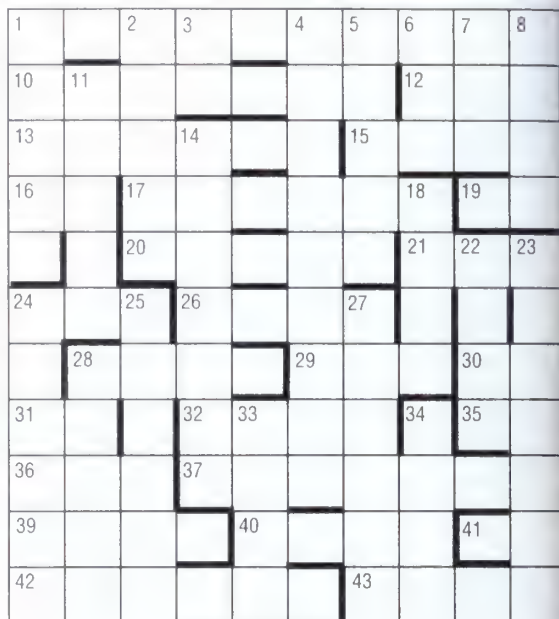
**S**ome of the clue answers must be scaled down before they can be entered into the diagram. Answers include seven proper names, one foreign word, and one common acronym. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 76. Play on!

### ACROSS

1. Falsettos erred in new version of half-Western song (7,2,6)
10. Minuet air gets transposed for piccolo, in Italy (9)
12. Trombone ensemble hides before a wedding (3)
13. Paying for Wagner's magnum opus takes "Time After Time" remix (9)
15. Reconnect relative to "Wozzeck," for example, when one is lost (8)
16. To sing alone loses nothing with ITT's revolutionary semi-conductor (5)
17. Mark shows rage, playing in double time (6)
19. Sound an A with Perlman on television—it's a kind of code (4)
20. Star characters quitting lousy orchestra—how yel-low! (5)
21. Rock musical doesn't have one quiet instrument (4)
24. Cantata divertissement enthralls little boy (3)
26. In 4/4 time we quietly point between signs (4)
28. It's a pain making a medley of each (4)
29. Stop musical group missing date (3)
30. Dynamic Duo swallows note in reverse (4)
31. Put on "Juan Carlos" or "José" at the opera house (3)
32. Prince, at the opera, has difficulty going topless (4)
35. A sample of Beatles' English: "Honest, man" (3)
36. Gathering for Beethoven Trio (3)
37. Mastering "Loco-motion" in ad (10)
39. "Penny Lane" coming back without low alto parts gets court case (4)
40. Night visitors at the opera? If down, they'll give you a leg up (4)
41. Band sends out bio (3)
42. Temptations' presenters one tests outside (6)
43. Nat's crazy Dead-head—but you can lay some music on me! (5)

### DOWN

1. Rush soprano to border (5)
2. Tchaikovsky's First. Do it in a new arrangement



3. Puccini heroine splits, going with a woman who was once Rosemary (3)
4. Reversing course, egg us on into confusion, taking Sondheim's initial hint (10)
5. "Stranger in Paradise"'s fifth remake comes back around (5)
6. Bass clef and, inconclusively, treble clef—it's sharp (4)
7. During "Dream," I dream! (4)
8. Half a dance cut from *Candide* called for action (4)
9. Sonata, e.g., gets fast in case (8)
11. *Grease* comes up short in an upcoming gathering of stars (6)
14. Wild and crazy J. Sebastian holds copyright #99 (7)
18. Rock hit covering number is lacking in substance (4)
22. Drink to "Barber of Seville" and a guitarist initially bringing back gold (4)
23. Film star with hair that's red in color—chic (3,3,3)
24. Maneuvers to perform in spasms (7)
25. Bringing memories of Barber, moving slowly in music, back to front (8)
27. Participants in shady dealings? Sounds like Hurok and Grundy! (8)
28. Returning soldiers assume Aida, not having died, shows lack of vitality (6)
33. Serious and small "Bravo" to man with no one (6)
34. Passing notice of old bass that's on top of it (4)
38. Father listening to one who takes a deep breath (4)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed form with name and address to "Key of C," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10011. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by December 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the February 1998 issue. Winners of the October puzzle, "RighTangles—V," are Paul Hopkins, Reno, Nevada; David Isaac, Piedmont, California; and Thomas R. Lawrence, Falmouth, Massachusetts.





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